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Mediascene

Collecting is a fever in the blood.

I've been wondering how it happened, how a simple pastime grew to become a way of life. I'm certain nobody planned it that way. Maybe collecting developed its more serious and relentless aspects out of the fact that the competition is much greater these days.

Frankly, I think I prefer it the old way.

I know it's chic by today's standards to renounce material things, but I've worked too long and too hard to afford that affectation. Anyone who grew up through a hand-me-down childhood will know exactly what I mean. Those of you who didn't consider yourselves fortunate—if you like, be my guests and subscribe to the Rockefeller philosophy that "money isn't everything."

For as long as I can remember, my most valuable things were always paper—books, primarily, although I can still recall many paper toys with uncommon fondness. Some of those were cut and fashioned from the backs of cereal boxes. Their price, of course, was having to finish what was inside the box every morning for breakfast—not always the most pleasant way to start the day. For years, I suspected that brain in particular was being used in a conspiracy against kids for some diabolic purpose. When the dog refused it, you knew something was wrong.

Still, it was a matter of individual choice—and the choicest paper toys were inevitably on the boxes of cereal whose contents were made from bran. Looking back, it becomes clear that the qualities of courage, determination and calculated decision-making were fostered during those years. I suppose every lesson has some pain in it.

Magazines and newspapers were a real source of treasure. Paper drives during WW2 were an event, and many a Saturday afternoon was spent canvassing the neighborhood for raw material. It did double duty for me; I saved the comics, read the magazines and savored the accompanying illustrations, and clipped an assortment of the great strips from newspapers. Many of them were influential in my personal development as an artist: Dick Tracy, Flash Gordon, Little Joe, Kevin the Bold, Beyond Mars, X-9, Alley Oop, and perhaps my all-time favorite, Johnny Hazard. Bundling old newspapers was an education in itself, not to mention the fact that it was easy money. The local scrap yard paid a staggering 40¢ for every 100 pounds of paper delivered to them. A fellow had to be careful, between paper drives and turning in soda bottles for a 2¢ deposit (5¢ for quarts), that he didn't wind up in another tax bracket.

Parental concern was another dangerous area, and rooting through other people's trash called for the most positive and exacting justification—not to mention finding a practical place in which to stash the stuff where it wouldn't be found and tossed out, thus causing one of the few recorded child heart attacks.

Collecting definitely had its pitfalls and perils.

It had its joys, too. Every few months or so, one of my uncles would drop off a shopping bag heaping full of comics that he'd bought used at two for a penny. My mother would always deliver a lengthy soliloquy on the hazards of eyestrain—but blindness was little enough price to pay for such an enjoyable way to spend a weekend.

I suppose that's how it all started. As my interest grew, so too did my desire to read and own more books. Eventually, I began to seek them out. What began as a way to spend a few hours on a Saturday afternoon, soon became a weekend ritual.

I was about ten or twelve at the time, and lived in the suburbs, so I had to start early in the morning. After a quick breakfast (the safest way to eat bran), I'd take off on my trusty, red Schwinn. It seemed only fitting because about halfway along the four-mile ride to the heart of the city was a bicycle shop that sold used comics—not many, but there was no second-guessing what might be there that day. It didn't pay to violate a sensible plan of action.

The next stop was at the foot of main street, in one of the dingiest little stores along the route. High up on a shelf in a gloom, above a battered Coke cooler, sat a small stack of old comics—never more than one or two of which I needed. The woman who watched the store was the oldest human being I've ever seen. I was glad there weren't too many books there.

A new magazine shop came next, which gave me a perspective on the current market. The comics were displayed on racks against the wall a good thirty feet or more long, each with full cover showing. A trip here was an adventure in itself, but every dime spent on a new book cost from two to twenty comics that could be had at other places. Few new books were ever bought here.

It took several years to discover an outgrown shop that nuzzled on a side street just below the city's post office—my next stop. I can still recall my first buy there: a dozen or more EC **Weird Science** and **Weird Fantasy** comics, an event that probably changed the course of my life. A nickel each.

I made up for it at the next stop, the Book Cellar (seller,get it!) Five steps below street level lurked a crumbling graveyard of old books and magazines. Everywhere in the dank, dark dungeon and piles of paper to be investigated. Empty, unused space was a myth long-forgotten here. The narrow walk space was lit by a pair of thirty-watt bulbs, at the end of which could be found the proprietor. His name was Jack, a wrinkled, diminutive man with the worst case bookstore slump I've ever seen. His collar size dwarfed his thin neck, which gave the illusion of having shrunk sometime after the shirt was put on. Jack was never without suit and tie, impeccable manners and a lively sense of humor. He made up for the thirty-watt bulbs.

An endless stream of odd characters came and went: a stuttering philosopher, a pseudo-politician who knew everything wrong with the city government (he later ran for Mayor and lost), and Jack's 300-pound protege who played Ollie to his Stan. The animated conversation between these gentlemen of leisure formed interesting background by which I found countless treasure.

I'll tell you about one, just to make my point. As the Cellar's longest comics customer, it was only fitting that I get first crack at a recently-arrived cache of books: **Superman** 1-150, **World's Finest** 1-50 and **Action** 17-200. The books had been stored in a barn for years by someone who had grown up as a Superman collector; a certificate of the Superman Code signed by Clark Kent and a secret code folder in the original envelope with the owner's name, Dickie Kano, was also included. The sale's pitch began, the comics were in beautiful shape, complete runs were hard to come by, the books cost quite a bit to pick up, etc. Eventually I broke down and paid the price, $20 for the works.

The two best stores were last on my route. The first was owned by a man whose son I later went to high school with (and whose life ended in a freak auto accident). This place endured the longest, and produced some of the primest books available from the floor-high stacks that lined lengthy tables. During summer vacation, one could patronize it every day and make important finds.

The main event I saved for last, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Helen's Book Store was a mecca for comics readers, a big store crammed from top to bottom with books. They were on shelves, in bins, on tabletops and in boxes everywhere, at least 10,000 at any given moment. Checking out every book by sifting through could take an entire day. It was a toss-up whether one could actually finish the task before Helen threw you out and closed the store.

Helen's was the Lost Dutchman Mine of comics, coverless 2 for 1¢, 2¢ each for books with good covers. **Adventure, Boy Commandos, Marvel Mystery, Captain America, Batman** were to be found in profusion. Those with more esoteric taste could shuffle through stacks of old pulps that rested against the far wall. Bicycles jammed the sidewalk in front of the store. For those who came to spend the day, a friendly, red cooler offered at least 20 different blends of ice-cold refreshment. Browsing became a high art form.

After Helen's, there was a definite danger of going cold turkey. The score could be so heavy, that tapering off was the only possible choice. I opted for a nearby magazine store. What-ever money was left over, if any, could now be safely spent on new comics.

By a remarkable twist of fate, my Grandmother's house was close by. She knew things about preparing food that have yet to be discovered by human ingenuity. Her wrought-iron enclosed front porch offered a tired traveller one of the world's most comfortable resting places, especially if he urgently needed to peruse a day's worth of hard-earned treasure. A loaf of home-baked bread, a glass of black cherry soda and thou.

Those were the days. What I wouldn't give to relive any one of them again. ●

STERANKO

COMICS — A READER'S VIEW

I just got **MEDIASCENE** 36 in the mail today. As usual, I turned to the *Comixscene* section and soaked up all the new covers (you usually seem to pick the best). The thing is, when I first started reading your publication, I used to enjoy hearing what new developments were going on in the comics biz. Lately, I've been outright distressed. Everytime I read this column lately, it seems that both Marvel and DC are on the verge of total disaster, or at least, total incompetence.

I can't really comment on this editorial switching deal yet, for I won't see the results for many months. But there are other things like the covers on Marvel's B&W magazines which have irked and sickened me to no end since the full-color **Starlord** issue came out. Somehow, **Savage Sword** has escaped this fate, and the difference is astonishing! Moving on to **Dracula**, I must say after reading Wolfman and Colan's version for so long, which has far outclassed any and all movie productions, I'd hate to see what any "new" team will do. (Perhaps they should cancel while there's still time.)

I'm shocked that Denny O'Neil left DC, as his Batman series in **Detective** was one of the two best books they put out (the first being **Warlord**—I notice nobody ever says anything about this book. Mike Grell must be just knocking those issues out month after month and staying light years away from problems and controversy.)

I enjoyed the previews of Jack Kirby's **Black Hole** strip. Kirby may not be a real artist, but he can draw!! Unfortunately no newspapers in my area print the planned thing—are there plans for a collected book?

By the way, in regards to your letter concerning Buck Rogers and the coverage of one movie/comics adaptation—why hasn't there been a mention of the Buck Rogers comic? It seems few people know anything about it, but I have it in front of me so I know I'm not dreaming. The **Buck Rogers** movie adaptation is one of the neatest, slickest, beautiful and faithful projects of its kind I've ever come across. Art is by Frank Bolle, Al McWilliams and Jose Delbo, and is far superior to the wretched **Star Wars** and **Galactica** adaptations. McWilliams' section of the story is definitely the finest, and contains some of the best-looking outer-space art since DC's **Star Hunters** series.

Now that Marvel's **FOOM** magazine is no more, how about taking a couple of pages every so often to honor a comics series that has either made some recent artistic achievement or one that has had a long-standing status of greatness? I wouldn't mind seeing something on a series like **Master of Kung Fu**, and interviews with the creative people. How about it? More can often be learned by looking back than forward, and sometimes it helps give one a better point of view.

In other realms, it seems that **Savage Sword of Conan** might just be due for cancellation soon—unless Roy Thomas decides to do all-new stories. Apparently he wanted to do all the adaptations out of chronological sequence, so he wouldn't have to wait 40 years when everyone involved might be too old to handle it. From here on up, **Conan the Barbarian** will be doing nothing but filling gaps. Of course, the gap-fillers we've seen so far are generally as good or better than the adaptations! I wonder if Roy ever considered merely doing a solid chronology, with the book coming out weekly instead of monthly? (It wouldn't have affected his workload at all, when you consider the already-existing page count per month.)

Henry Kujawa
Camden NJ

Check out this month's comic news for an update on Roy's plans for the coming year. There are no projects underway yet for a collection of Kirby's **Black Hole** *series—but it could probably be arranged if a publisher was really interested.*

THE RECCHIA REVIEW

One of the most important aspects of all media, aside from entertainment, is the ability to both inform and organize, and I feel you've done a fine job of that with your request for reader aid for recouping the losses of the San Diego Convention.

Conan really sounds fascinating, because it looks like the people behind it really have a feeling for the character and can give it new dimensions that will bring out its potentiality (like Giger on **Alien**), not bastardize it out of lack of comprehension (like **Superman**). Never having been a Conan fan of any measure, I find myself surprisingly looking forward to this project very much.

I can say the same for **Childhood's End**, though I must state in all fairness that Phil DeGuere's advance comments on **Dr. Strange** were, as I recall, very enthusiastic, and only now is he making apologies—when a project succeeds they all say, "We knew it all along," and when it fails they say why it wasn't very good. I'd love to know what the apologies would have sounded like if **Star Wars** had done badly at the box office.

Dan Recchia
Mamaroneck NY

The San Diego Con is still impossibly far from recouping their financial losses due to a theft of their operating funds. We'd like to reiterate our plea to comic fans everywhere to dig deep and come up with at least a buck or two to become part of the con's Recovery crew. Send whatever you can to: BOX 17066, SAN DIEGO, CA 92117. Or send us a twenty dollar bill—we'll forward it to the Recovery program and send you a year's subscription to **MEDIASCENE**.

A DEFENSE FOR BUTTON

I enjoyed seeing your article in **MEDIASCENE** 36 on the current portfolio market, despite the fact that it was too brief.

As the publisher of Tom Sutton's **The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath** portfolio, I naturally wish you had mentioned it. I don't say this for my own benefit (I've made back my money on it), but because I feel that Tom Sutton is a sadly underrated artist who deserves the attention.

As much as I like artists such as Alex Nino and Nestor Redondo, I find their portfolio work emptily decorative and boring. Obviously these men were basing their illustrations on certain concepts, but the point of Sutton's **Kadath** folio was to visualize particularly intense scenes from a specific story, in much the same way that Wrightson's beautiful **Frankenstein** folios do. The illustrations therefore have more meaning than something that simply sprouted from the artist's imagination to create something that only he truly understands.

I'd also like to comment on your observation that something as natural as Eisner's **Spirit** Portfolio isn't exactly a big seller. This particular folio is beautiful, one of the best, but at $35 a lot of us just can't afford it.

Barry Windsor-Smith is one of our modern masters of illustration, but he too often overprices himself. And one only has so much wall space in which to frame this stuff. Perhaps this is what Smith was thinking when he produced **Excalibur**, which isn't a portfolio at all, but a handsome set of bookmarks.

Mark Burbey
Miami FL

We agree: Tom Sutton is one of comics' underrated artists. Even though we call the **Kadath** *folio, we honestly find it does not compare to some of the other art folios and is Tom's more imaginative comic work.*

CONAN? EAST VS WEST

I have been a subscriber to and a reader of **MEDIASCENE** for a number of years and I greatly enjoyed your last issue on **Conan**. However, I couldn't help noticing, for obvious reasons, that the quotes from John Milius which you used to open your story came from my piece on **Conan** in **New West Magazine**. Likewise, some of the art you used also appeared previously in **New West**. None of this is meant to detract from the excellent job you did, but it seems to me it would have been only fair, your claims of exclusivity notwithstanding, to give **New West** some credit for getting a jump on that story.

What do you think?
Kenneth Turan
Los Angeles CA

Your point is well taken, Ken. I assure you, however, that your excellent feature in **New West Magazine** *[August 27, 1979] titled* The Barbarian in Babylon *did not generate our coverage of the upcoming* **Conan** *film.*

We have been in constant touch over the years with Roy Thomas, who is one of the film's story consultants due to his long association with the character's appearances in Marvel comics, and have run numerous [though limited] news blurbs about the movie's progress.

Over a year and a half ago, I spent the evening with the film's associate producer, Edward Summer, discussing its growth and planning its ultimate coverage in this magazine. He described three pieces of art that he had heard about from Edward Pressman, the producer, and promised to give us an exclusive as soon as the material was approved for release. We were given permission to reproduce one of those illustrations a month or so later, and ran it in a Fantasy Film Forecast issue last summer. **New West** *reproduced a section of one of the other paintings which were created at that time. As you know, Oliver Stone was juggling several versions of the film's treatment during that period which ran from prehistoric alien visitors to Hyboria to post-holocaust WWO science fiction. Unsure of the film's eventual outcome, the producers decided to keep the whole works under wraps until a positive direction could be mounted.*

The project was never far from our thoughts, but it came as a complete surprise last spring when Bob Greenberg, the producer's assistant, called to discuss my possible participation on **Conan**. *A number of artists were contacted during this screening period, and eventually Bill Stout was hired for the job. Again, Greenberg brought me up-to-date on the latest proceedings.*

Meanwhile, **MEDIASCENE**'s *west coast editor, Don Glut, was also pursuing the project. Greenberg just happens to be Glut's brother-in-law, and the topic of* **Conan** *was a continual source for conversational material. In addition, Don saw a great number of the production illustrations as they were being completed. Plans were firmed up to cover* **Conan** *during my trip to the coast for the summer con season.*

In early August, I visited the A-Team offices [out of which the film is being produced] and set up interview dates with the people involved. At the same time, I had the opportunity to see most of the art that had been done for the project, and decided to build a feature for **MEDIASCENE** *based on the artist's visualizations of John Milius' screenplay.*

I had not seen the **New West** *article until after all this was completed. Your piece in that magazine devoted more than three-quarters of its space to the background of Conan and his creator, Robert E. Howard, and a capsule publishing history of the books—a kind of cogent overview that set up the ending, the part that dealt with the film itself.*

Our coverage went exclusively for the film material because most of our readership already has a solid working knowledge of the character. Our primary points of interest were the plot, the costumes, the settings, the weapons, the source of the action, the attitude about the material as a whole and the casting of the various roles.

The art used for our feature was selected by Milius, Cobb, Stout and myself. Only two of the illustrations in **MEDIASCENE** *were duplicated in* **New West**, *the sword and the Conan figure—both expository pieces that Milius insisted on using. He also approved the feature with no cuts. We talked about the film and my possible involvement with it as a production illustrator, but decided to hold off with a Milius interview until the shooting is finally underway, for obvious reasons. At that point, he preferred the quotes that were used.*

My feeling was that your feature and mine took different directions. You basically reported the news that there was to be a **Conan** *movie, while we concentrated on the details. The overlap was almost non-existent, but both succeeded at what they set out to accomplish. So how come you don't write for us?*

COMPLIMENTS FROM CAROLINE

Thanks for the wonderful feature in **MEDIASCENE** 37. It's so very rare that the facts are ever correct. I was surprised and delighted by your careful research and refreshing approach.

Both Judd and I have attended a number of conventions in the States; they were terrific, and those who attended were so warm towards us.

Your readers might be interested in knowing that I should be starting another film project quite soon. It continues the character of Stella Star, and could possibly develop into a series like the James Bond pictures. At the moment, the title of the film is **Star Riders**, although I think that may change in the coming months. I'll let you know.

Hope to see you someday soon. Best wishes.
Caroline Munro
London England

All the people we write about in **MEDIASCENE** *should be so charming—especially after they see what was said about them. Kidding aside, the pleasure was all ours.*●

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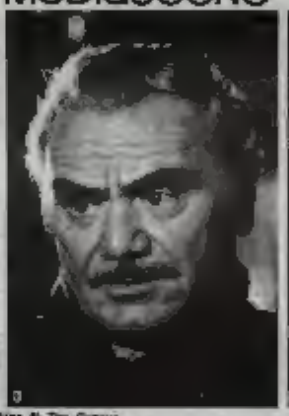
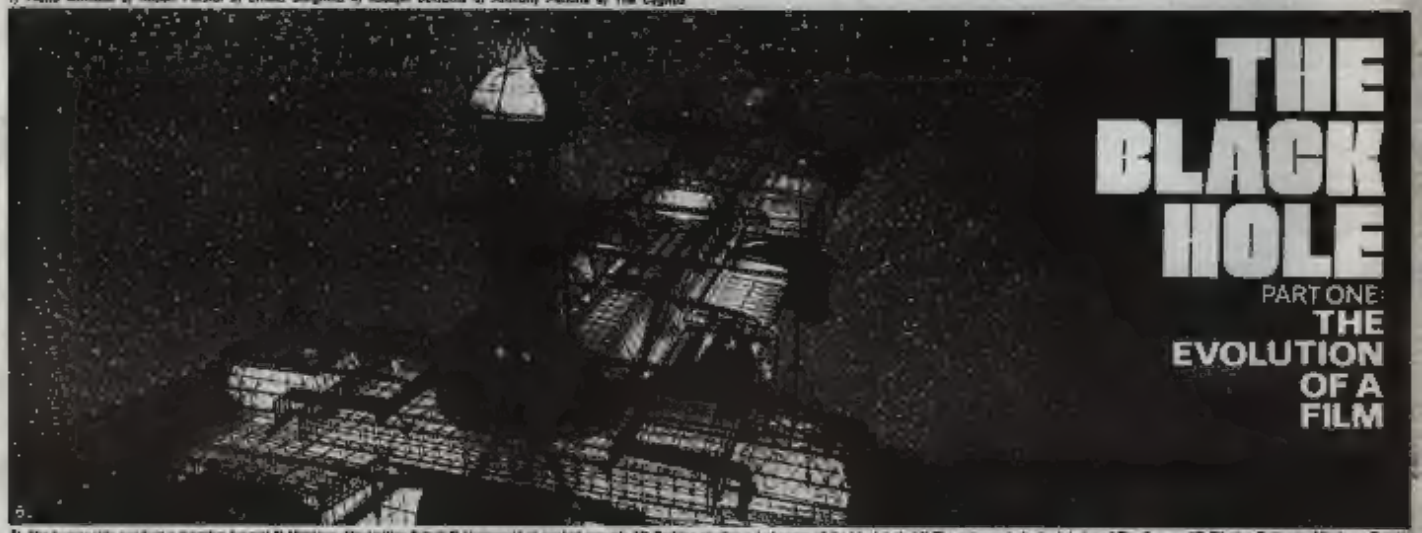


1) Yvette Mimieux 2) Robert Forster 3) Ernest Borgnine 4) Joseph Bottoms 5) Anthony Perkins 6) The Cygnus



THE BLACK HOLE

PART ONE:
THE EVOLUTION OF A FILM

7) The humanoids conduct a macabre funeral 8) Mimieux, Maximilian Schell 9) Humanoid at control console 10) Perkins studies a hologram of the black hole 11) The astronauts in the interior of The Cygnus 12) Filming Bottoms, Mimieux, Forster

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Black holes may be entrances to Wonderlands. But are there Alices or white rabbits?

—Carl Sagan

On December 11, 1979, Walt Disney Productions will unveil their answer to one of the greatest unsolved mysteries of astro-science when they release the $17.5 million science-fiction super-spectacle, **The Black Hole**. It is a breakthrough project for the Disney organization in many respects, not the least of which is a more sophisticated attitude towards the making and selling of a film that puts aside almost a half century of precedents set by the company's standard juvenile projects.

Surprisingly, there are no kids or animals in **The Black Hole**—they were judiciously eliminated from an early draft of the screenplay. As for the cast, they are by no means the scrubbed and saccharine family of players usually found in Disney films. Maximilian Schell, Yvette Mimieux, Anthony Perkins, Joe Bottoms, Robert Forster and Ernest Borgnine are the strongest actors ever assembled in a science-fiction film—anywhere. The script, too, encompasses a share of violent drama, which may earn Disney its first PG rating, but there are no plans to make any concessions to a younger market. This may even become the first film in Disney history to go out with the company logo below the title—but that particular decision is still under consideration; there's no big rush to become quite that radical yet.

The story behind the making of **The Black Hole** reaches back to 1974, when Disney producer Winston Hibler first sold the company on a science-fiction oriented project titled **Space Station One**, which featured a black hole as a minor background feature. Hibler died one year later, and Ron Miller, Disney vice-president in charge of creative affairs for TV and films, took over the project. Because of the growing public awareness and curiosity about black holes, the phenomenon was built up until it became the heart of the movie. The title, **The Black Hole**, followed naturally.

Star Wars undoubtedly figured in Disney's final decision to totally commit themselves to **The Black Hole**, as the studio remained resolute throughout '76 and '77, carefully planning their moves in detail. A screenplay by Jeb Rosebrook and Gerry Day, based on a story by Rosebrook, Barbara Bassak and Richard Landau was accepted, and production designer/special effects wizard Peter Ellenshaw was called out of retirement to prepare the film's visual treatment. It soon became evident that this was no ordinary kids' film—the budget alone was spiralling to double that of **Pete's Dragon**, Disney's previous high-water mark in spending. The film would eventually take over every stage and production facility on the lot.

Along the way, Miller decided that **The Black Hole** should be a more ambitious production than the studio had produced in the last ten years—it should be as effective and powerful a fantasy feature as **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea** had been in 1954. The parallels between **The Black Hole** and **20,000 Leagues** [illegible] progressed just as Kirk Douglas and James Mason had lent a new respectability to Jules Verne's epic tale, so too did Maximilian Schell, Anthony Perkins and Ernest Borgnine add their weight to the space project. Even the choice of an outside director became a strong parallel development. For **20,000 Leagues**, Disney recruited top director Richard Fleischer. They did the same with Gary Nelson, who had brought the hard-hitting production of **Washington: Behind Closed Doors** to the TV screen as ABC's opening barrage in the fall ratings war.

Just as the cast and primary production crew were carefully chosen for their special talents, so too have

all the remaining technical positions been filled. In fact, there are probably more Hollywood Oscars represented in **The Black Hole** than any other film ever made. Harrison Ellenshaw heads up the painting department—he did all the mattes for **Star Wars**, and has just left to work on **The Empire Strikes Back**.

Special effects are being handled by four Oscar winners, Peter Ellenshaw (**Mary Poppins**), Eustace Lycett (**Mary Poppins**, **Bedknobs and Broomsticks**), Art Cruickshank (**Fantastic Voyage**) and Danny Lee (**Bedknobs and Broomsticks**).

Costume designer Bill Thomas won his golden statue for **Spartacus**, and art director John Mansbridge has been nominated twice. The score for **The Black Hole** is by Oscar-winner John Barry, and has a flavor not unlike the many powerful themes he composed for six of the best James Bond films.

And, of course, among the actors, there are Academy Award winners in Maximilian Schell (**Judgment at Nuremberg**) and Ernest Borgnine (**Marty**).

Even the soundtrack of **The Black Hole** has been endowed with a kind of personality all its own. The dubbing and mixing engineers have come up with a plan that calls for audio identification of certain images, and the entire film is enhanced by background accompaniment. Engines throb and pulsate, robots whirr and clatter along, while a host of other electronic sounds give great texture to the galactic drama. The hole itself has a low, rumbling resonance, and the Cygnus cries, groans and echoes as its mammoth skeleton framework undergoes the torturous gravitational stresses.

The story originally began with the deep-space probe ship *Palomino*. On its way back to Earth it [illegible] on the original disturbance—which results in a ten minute prologue introducing Captain Holland (Forster), geophysicist Kate McCrae (Mimieux), physicist Alex Durant (Perkins), and the rest of the crew, including Booth (Borgnine), Pyser (Bottoms), the robot V.I.N.Cent, and his peg-legged predecessor, Old Bob. At the last minute, this entire sequence was eliminated to get viewers right into the heart of the story. The first words heard come from V.I.N.Cent, who calls out, "Mr. Pyser, it's the biggest black hole I've ever seen."

Kate immediately wants to draw closer to the phenomenon in order to run some astrophysical studies, while Capt. Holland is wary of the dangers posed by a gravity so intense that even light is trapped in its vortex—a force so powerful that the mass of three large stars is needed to create it, and the more space debris that falls into the hole the stronger it becomes.

The space explorers take the *Palomino* closer to investigate, and quickly become trapped in the galactic maelstrom. As gravity draws them down, they suddenly spot a dark object in the space ahead. Pulled closer, they discover the massive starship, Cygnus (named after the first black hole ever successfully recorded, Cygnus X-1), and, as they are about to make contact, the great ship lights up.

Shuttle-cars, travelling in clear tubes down the length of the Cygnus, transport the *Palomino* crew to the control center of the ship, where they find a giant, sinister robot in charge of a cluster of smaller 'robots.' The fear of being trapped on a derelict ghost ship, populated only by mechanical servants, is dispelled when Hans Reinhardt (Maximilian Schell) steps out to greet them.

Kate's father was one of the original crew of the *Cygnus*, and she asks what became of him. Reinhardt explains that, while investigating the black hole, the Cygnus was crippled, and the crew attempted to escape in various lifecraft, but the hole's pull was too strong and they perished. He explains his survival as a result of the discovery of a new power source called Cygnium. It drives the massive side-mounted engine pods, and allows him to orbit the vortex without being pulled into it.

Reinhardt reveals he has been experimenting with objects sent into the black hole, including several of the humanoid servitors he has created to test the pressures involved. He has even managed to bring one probe back from the mysterious depths. Coincidentally, he was planning to plunge the Cygnus into the black hole when the *Palomino* arrived. Though he feels that he could enter it and live, his discovery would be in vain, because even radio beams cannot escape the inexorable force of gravity.

Small incidents begin to disturb the *Palomino* crew as time passes. Reinhardt's story seems somehow suspicious, and his personal robot, called Max (ranked before Schell's signing), is more of an offensive weapon than a mechanical servant. The ensuing developments make Capt. Holland decide to escape with the crew while there's still a chance.

Reinhardt attempts to stop

13

13: Schell and robot Maximilian 14: Maximilian 15: Perkins, Borgnine examine the Cygnus hologram

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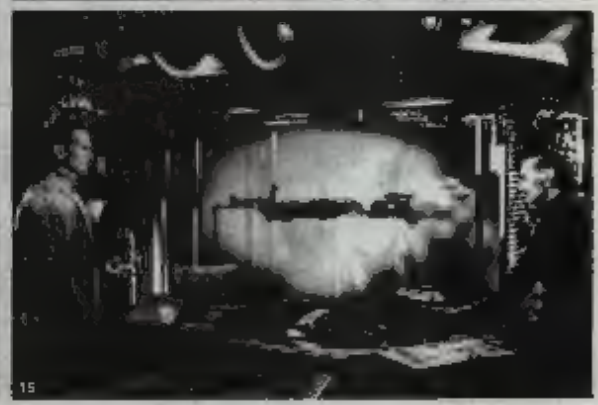

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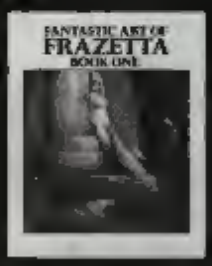

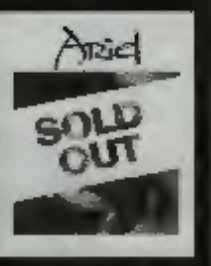

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The 1979 Frazetta Calendar spotlights another year's worth of sword and sorcery masterpieces by the master of high fantasy. This new offering features several of *the rare book club jacket and folder illustrations*—none of which have been reprinted in the various Frazetta volumes may are yours now $4.95

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them, and reveals his intentions to take Kate along with him into the hole because of her highly-developed ESP powers, which may be able to create a communications link. The drama hurtles toward a spectacular climax as the two factions clash in mortal combat. Some of the characters die, while a rain of meteors damage the Cygnus' power pod. Without its engines, the giant craft succumbs to the inevitable pull of the black hole—and begins to tear itself apart. Four of the characters push off in an 18-foot space-probe craft and begin the journey into the black hole, which occupies the final seven minutes of the film—the most carefully guarded secret since Steven Spielberg's alien—Dave Prowse! lips.

Neither the director, the Ellenshaws, nor anyone else connected with the film is talking about what will eventually be seen on the screen, but they are quick to advance various scientific theories—all red herrings to keep potential viewers guessing. Among the ideas they propose are: perhaps time simply stops in a black hole and everything is frozen in place; perhaps there is a "wormhole" effect like a corridor to another dimension; perhaps a black hole is merely a tunnel to an as yet undiscovered white hole, perhaps... They just aren't talking.

The true sense of wonder which surrounds the filming of **The Black Hole** can best be described by matte painter David Mattingly, for whom this is a brand new experience—his first real, major Hollywood assignment.

"I don't know how to judge a lot of these things yet, so I'm constantly surprised. I remember a scene in the script involving a sequence in which V.I.N.Cent fights another robot, which was played by a professional mime. It really didn't read like much on paper, but when it came through in the daily rushes, I was just stunned at how right, how perfect the mime was as a robot."

Mattingly explained how Joe Bottoms hung around the special effects department between shots. "Joe was fascinated with what we were able to do, but was having trouble relating to some of the actions he was being called upon to perform. His only other big part, I think, had been in **Holocaust**, so he was trying to figure out how to look like he was scared playing a scene 60 feet up a catwalk, which is how it would appear on film, when the actual work was being done on a two-foot high platform.

"All of the actors I met seemed to be enjoying themselves, even if they weren't always sure what was going to be added to their scenes later. It's not easy to stare in awe at a blank wall, reacting to things not going on, and trusting the special effects people to keep you from looking silly when they finally put in the ultimate effects.

"I recall my first day on the set. I decided to look around, just to check out the props and set designs—and I ran right into Ernest Borgnine, who was doing the same thing. I mean right into him! Now I only weigh about half of what he does, but I knocked him clean over!

"I'd seen him portray some of the neatest characters ever put on film, from Sergo in **From Here to Eternity** to the sadistic old man in **Willard**—and now, there he was, getting up off the floor. He stood up and—would you believe it—said, 'Are you all right? I didn't mean to hurt you!' I was pretty embarrassed, but even more surprised that one of my favorite actors was suddenly concerned about me. Of course, we just laughed about it.

"It was interesting that, unlike the rest of the cast, Borgnine stayed on the set long after he'd actually finished shooting his scenes. I just couldn't get over the fact that, as a very highly paid performer, he'd stick around, chat with the crew, help to move some of the bigger props into the sets and even push a broom to help clean up afterward. What a guy.

Overall, the production of **The Black Hole** seems to have taken on much of the majestic power of its title. Work progressed slowly, carefully and deliberately toward a satisfying conclusion. There were few surprises for the cast and crew, but then even the smallest surprises usually cost thousands of dollars. One happy accident occurred when the hull of the agricultural center of the giant spacecraft was to be suddenly shattered by a large meteor.

The scene was very complicated; there were cables around Robert Forster, Joe Bottoms, the robots, trees, shrubbery and every other loose object, for the purpose of creating an illusion where they all flew into the vacuum of space. Wind machines, cranes and winches, lighting effects and dozens of other details were also coordinated so that the scene could be captured in a single long take from several angles. The action called for Robert Forster to grasp a robot's leg while being sucked into space.

Everything went well until the moment the figures were to be pulled upward. With the help of a cable, the robot was jerked off the floor and into the air. Simultaneously Forster leaped forward and grabbed the creature's leg—which popped off in mid-air. The look on the astonished actor's face was so good that everyone was in favor of keeping it in the film—the human element was priceless. Unfortunately, it was decided to replace it with a second, perfect take because there were too many continuity problems later in the film.

Director Gary Nelson is staying on through all the post-production chores to assure that everything possible is being provided for the film's success, including the mixing of the music and dialogue looping. This is unique among Disney directors, most of whom are planning their next project before finishing the one at hand. It has pleased the special effects people not only because it makes him available to answer last minute questions, but also communicates a sense of personal enthusiasm that has been passed along to the crew.

Because of the sheer volume of special effects involved in the filming, a shooting schedule of 120 days was planned. Most films are made between 40 and 50 days. The entire project turned into a strategic exercise of abstract imagination as actors were called upon to perform with elements that would be added months later in special effects, and Nelson was forced to direct sequences that would have to be artificially created afterward out of paint and optical tricks.

Both Peter Ellenshaw and his son, Harrison (who supervised the matte paintings), were extremely candid while talking to **MEDIASCENE** at Disney's Burbank Studios. Harrison Ellenshaw expressed his admiration for the director's ability:

"In a Hitchcockian way, Gary knew exactly what he wanted before he did every scene. I know this because he was a tremendous help to me in coordinating the matte shots. Normally, matching up actors to a painting for real continuity is terribly time-consuming, but we just sat down, and the pieces went together quite easily. This type of picture is physically the largest of its kind around, so the number of details to keep track of is staggering.

"There was a big battle scene in the main corridor, and the difficulty was that we only built one part of it, about 70 feet worth, which had to be staged to match paintings that would make it look 1500 feet long. And we only made one side of the corridor, so that Gary had to constantly move the camera to get the proper reverse angles he needed from the actors.

"Gary kept all that in his head. I don't know how; I sure couldn't. Even with full storyboards, you can't always tell when your tracking shot will run right off the set, or maintain a smooth, flowing coordination of action that is needed for good editing. And the real credit to Gary is that when we put the live action and the special effects together, it fit, all the way through the film."

Peter, who has worked with some of the finest directors of the past 45 years, is equally lavish in his praise: "We're making a big deal about this because we had a tremendously tight deadline—an impossible deadline. The distribution department said it had to be finished by Christmas, but we had always considered spring 1980 as the ideal finishing date.

"If we hadn't had somebody who could knock this whole project together efficiently, we would have been in real trouble. Gary has an excellent sense of direction, which was invaluable on a movie this complicated. He stayed on the production for over a year, right through the special effects work, and he always knew how the live action integrated into the special effects. On virtually any scene, you could ask him if the people walk in left-to-right or right-to-left, and he always knew, precisely. He has the whole picture in his head, and really doesn't get enough credit for it."

Nelson's reply was pragmatic: "I don't know. They gave me lots of money, so I guess I have to give up something."

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16) Humanoid 17) Maximilian and the humanoids 18) The astronauts in the heart of the Cygnus

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18) The mystery of the humanoids 19) The crew of the Palomino with V.I.N.Cent on the Cygnus' teleport-dar

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THE BLACKHOLE
TOGETHER
THEY MUST FACE THE
MOST AWESOME
TERROR IN
THE UNIVERSE...
AND WHAT
LIES BEYOND!

THE BLACK HOLE

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR GARY NELSON

Gary Nelson was born into a family involved with filmmaking; his father was a director and his mother a casting director. He graduated from high school and went directly to work as an assistant to John Ford in 1955 on **The Searchers**. Following a two year hitch in the Army, Nelson began directing for TV, including shows like **Gal Smart, Have Gun, Will Travel, Love American Style, Police Story** and **Kojak**. The high point of his career came in 1978, when he was chosen as the director of the ABC-TV miniseries **Washington: Behind Closed Doors**, for which he received an Emmy nomination.

Nelson himself looks more like he belongs in front of the camera than behind it; his deep-tanned features suggest perfect leading man material. His manner is firm, decisive. Though his voice is extremely soft-spoken, one hand was wrapped in a cast which he said he'd hurt "training" a horse.

The Black Hole is Nelson's second film for Disney Productions (**Freaky Friday** was made in 1976), but the prestigious honor of being chosen to direct the studio's most ambitious project since **Snow White** is not lost on him. "**The Black Hole** was a challenge," he admits. "And, if it is successful, I will have met that challenge."

Steranko interviewed Gary Nelson at the Disney Studios on August 16, 1979.

STERANKO: Do you have any kind of science-fiction background that drew you to this project? For example, do you read a lot of it?

GARY NELSON: No, I'm not a nut about sf. I don't go out of my way to see science-fiction films, either. Obviously, **2001** is a great movie—it holds up as a massive piece of filmmaking. Lucas spoiled a lot of that old grandeur because he jammed everything into **Star Wars**.

JS: If that's true, why did you make **The Black Hole**?

GN: Believe it or not, it was because of Peter Ellenshaw's paintings. They're the reason I took this picture. I wasn't really turned on by the story they sent me in 1977, it only had about 60 pages of script at the time. So I initially passed on it. It was only after three calls from the producer that I agreed to come down on a Saturday to look at the models, some of the miniatures and the renderings. When I walked into Peter's office and saw the artwork, I knew I wanted to work on the film.

Another factor was adequate preparation time. We spent a year planning every detail, which is something you just don't do on an ordinary film. The techniques we were creating demanded research so that we wouldn't wind up in the **Star Trek** situation by spending lots of money on tricks that might not work after the cast has quit the picture and are unavailable for retakes.

JS: Considering the title of the film, exactly how much of the black hole itself will be seen—and how soon will the viewers get to take a look at it?

GN: At the very opening of the picture—almost immediately—we discover the black hole.

The *Cygnus* has enormous viewports and windows in the control room and various other areas that look out to the hole, so even when we're inside, we see and feel the presence of the black hole. I would say that perhaps 40 percent of the film is exposed to space in some manner.

JS: Of course the hole effect is animated in some way, but how did you solve the problem of keeping each shot from being repetitive? For example, did you create a master hole shot and use it from different angles?

GN: Let me preface my answer by saying there is a great deal of animation in the film, primarily in the latter and climactic reels. But when it came to creating the hole—well, when you title a picture **The Black Hole**, you'd better come up with something spectacular.

It literally took months to create. We went through many tests and experiments until we arrived at an effect which contained so many different elements that it's difficult to explain all the details. There are fifteen or twenty separate ingredients needed to make just one black hole view—some mechanical, some staged and photographed, and others using Harrison Ellenshaw's matte work.

We worked it out so that the character of the black hole changes as the *Cygnus* travels closer to it. The first three-quarters of the film are superficially consistent because the story takes place on the *edge* of the hole, not getting too close yet. At the end of the film, as we begin to draw closer to it, the black hole changes character, becoming progressively more dynamic, with several different viewpoints. We spent a year and a half coming up with a good black hole effect, and I think it will pay off.

JS: That sounds like nearly a quarter of a million dollars was invested just in the development of one effect.

GN: Easily. But in the overall scheme of the project, that number is almost insignificant—the black hole is the key element of the film, so it had to be right.

JS: Did you manage to stay within the budget and keep the film on schedule?

GN: I went a hundred and forty or fifty days, and kept the costs within the $17 million range, as planned. We had hoped for a slightly shorter shooting schedule—around one hundred and twenty days.

JS: That's certainly a much cheaper figure than many other films are coming in at. How did you break down the preparation time, and how did it affect the budget?

GN: In January 1978 work began on the black hole effect itself, and seven months later we were satisfied with the results. This way, we had the biggest problem solved before a foot of film was shot, as we knew how to manipulate it, rather than let it surprise us later and hold up our release dates.

Then I spent about six months working on the story, casting, sorting out pre-production problems.

JS: Did you have extensive storyboards done as well?

GN: After the hole effect and the story were under control we spent six months having boards drawn up for every foot of film. The storyboard artists had an office right across the hall from mine. I was there every day going over the script, using Peter's designs and set concepts, and we would plot out all the angles, movement, sequence of events. Then I had meetings with everyone connected with the film to make sure they understood how each individual shot would be executed.

JS: The sheer scale of "the largest Disney film ever" must have caused its own headaches. What comes to mind first?

GN: Mostly keeping track of complicated camera angles, such as making one half of a set look like a whole room through camera movements across the stage. Some of the sets were very large, and we had an idea for a special crane in one section of the *Cygnus* that was discarded because it would have meant inventing it from scratch.

We felt that if we were going to work on a massive scale, the main robot, V.I.N.Cent, would have to be easy to work, because he is in about 60 percent of the film. The simplest way is to put someone inside, but then it immediately looks humanoid, which we did not want. We finally settled on the tin can design for V.I.N.Cent in the film—he's very small, and the studio magic made it work.

JS: Of course he'll be compared with R2D2.

GN: Yeah, but V.I.N.Cent can talk. And he's got a companion robot—an older model actually—named Old Bob, who can float twenty feet off the ground. R2D2 can't do that.

JS: Did anyone suggest that you design the film with merchandising potential in mind? One early rumor had it that there was a kid and a [illegible]

GN: They wish we would consider merchandising more often, sure. But that stuff often gets in the way of the story. Three years ago there was a dog and a little boy with a baseball cap. But then we decided not to make a typical Disney film.

JS: You're going after a real action/adventure market for the whole family, the way **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea** did in the 50s.

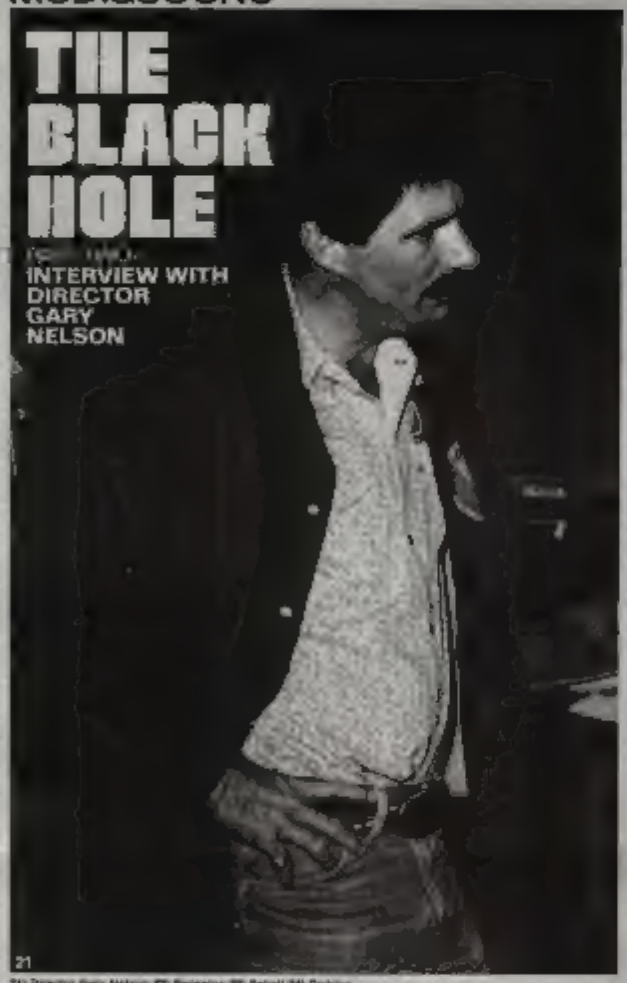
GN: Exactly. We tried not to design the interiors so that they are unrealistically colorful—we tried to assume that everything had a function, and wasn't just there to hype up a set for the kids. Lights don't flash at random. We tried to get away from that plastic look you see on TV, and all those noisy bleeps made with synthesizers.

JS: Another step away from the typical Disney film aura was in the casting. **The Black Hole** seems to be the only science-fiction film made to date with an entire cast of real actors instead of cameo stars and unknowns. The whole lineup, from Maximilian Schell to Ernest Borgnine to Yvette Mimieux are solid performers, so the film won't necessarily stand or fall on the special effects or director's style. There are really top people at the core of this cast.

GN: That was a conscious, deliberate move on our part. First, it alerts the audiences that we're reaching for a broader market. We're not using the Disney stock company. Only Yvette has ever made a film here before, but that was about ten years ago.

JS: Bringing in Maximilian Schell for the key role was really an impressive coup, particularly when you're used to Don Knotts and Dean Jones as stars.

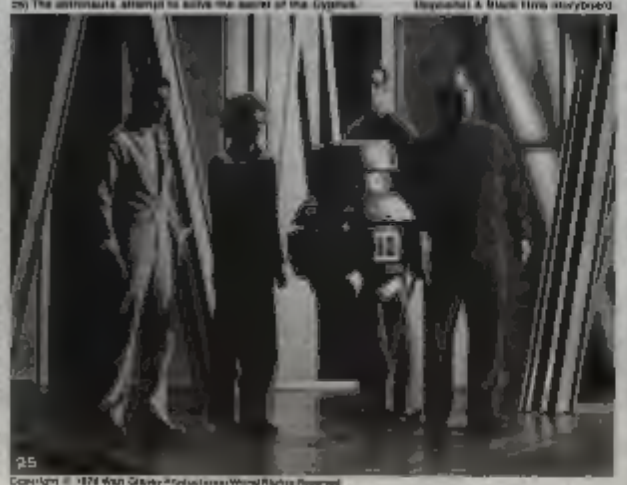
GN: Well, he is one of the best actors around, and he happens to be perfect in a part calling for an American of German extraction.



21) Director Gary Nelson 22) Borgnine 23) Schell 24) Perkins

22 23 24

25) The astronauts attempt to solve the secret of the *Cygnus*. Opposite) A black hole storyboard



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cast in the mold of Wernher von Braun and the current space program technicians. Right from the start, we never thought of anyone other than Max for the part.

There was an excellent relationship on the set, and I liked working with everybody. We were all making a straight dramatic picture. I particularly liked working with Schell, first because he had the most fully developed and active character in the script. And second, he's very receptive and inventive—and an incredible actor. Perhaps, he didn't tap his *full* potential in this film, but only because the subject and the script did not have the real depth of some of his past work. He *did* create marvelous shadings to his character, though—often by simply adding a line or two at the appropriate place.

I know you're looking for interesting stories and anecdotes, and I'm sorry we don't have too many—they're usually like old war tales—you have to be *there* most of the time. I sometimes think I ought to make up some stories for the press. But the story I'm about to tell you *is* true. It just sounds incredible, and it has to do with how I got Max to agree to do the film.

You see, I had to fly to Europe to talk to him; I mean this is Maximilian Schell we're talking about. He liked the part, liked the idea of working here, in fact, liked everything—but me. It's not that he disliked me, he just didn't know who I was, and simply wanted to meet me.

He was directing his own project at the time, so I flew over, very apprehensive, I might add, to meet a great actor on his home ground. I was somewhat at a disadvantage, waiting for him to come off a set in his hotel room—you know, standing there with my valise in hand, asking, "Please Mr. Schell, will you do my movie?" You always feel like a schmuck in those situations.

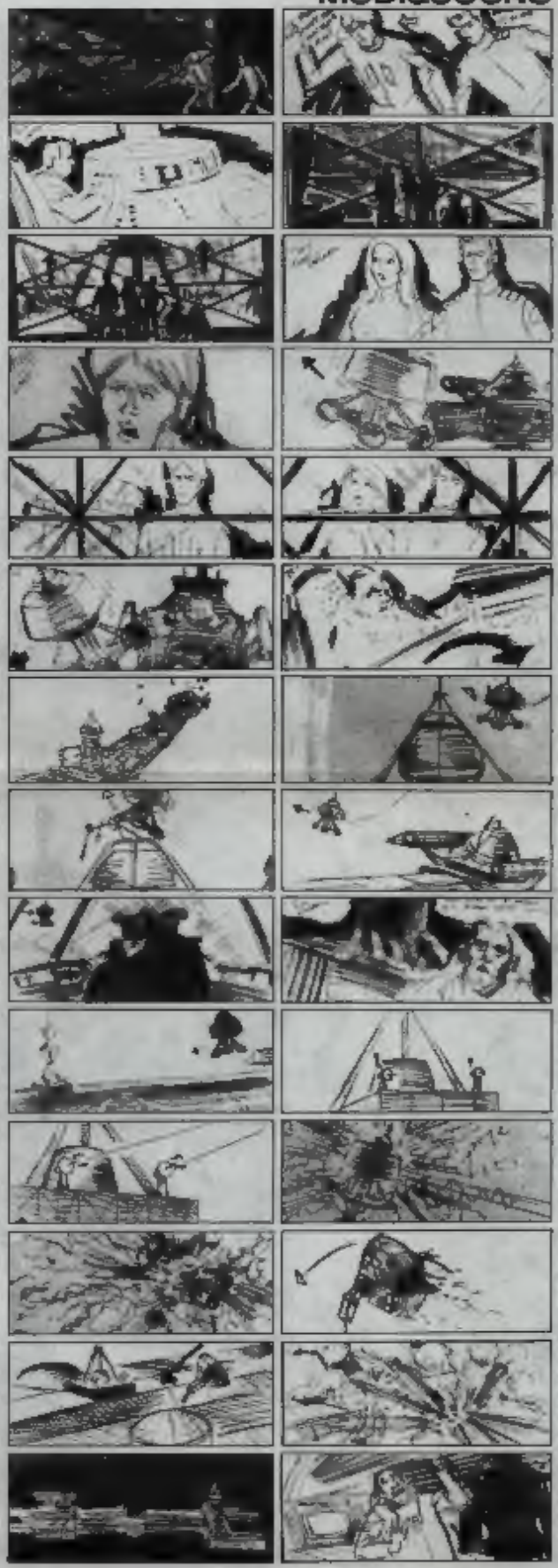
When we finally met and talked for a while, we got into a discussion of actors and how they play their parts. Then he began mentioning Jason Robards, and pointed out a particular film that really displayed his range quite effectively. He began to rave about this film to the point where he said he was going to call his friends all over Europe and scream it for them. Then he asked me if I knew what he was talking about, and I told him that I not only knew it, but had directed it. He had been raving about **Washington: Behind Closed Doors** and didn't know I'd done it. As a matter of fact, I thought he was setting me up for a while, but he honestly didn't know.

JS: He was right. That was a great part for Robards, and the film had real tension and style about it—all the requirements to take an Emmy.

GN: A lot of people said so at the time, and I was nominated. I thought it had a good chance myself, and when they called out the winner I jumped up before it registered that they had announced the director of **Holocaust**. I immediately resigned from the Academy.

But, as far as **The Black Hole**, I think that's what convinced Max to go with us, and it became a very nice union for him, Disney and myself.

JS: What about the other actors? I can see your respect and admiration for Schell runs deep.



GN: Yes, it does, and that extends to the entire cast as well, because they were able to take their parts and improve them with their acting abilities. You see, the movie is obviously the star here—the characters have to accommodate themselves to the limitations of the film. But there's hardly a finer group of people around who could improve the picture more by reaching into themselves for good performances.

JS: What was the most difficult scene in the film? Was there any that had to be done over again because it was simply too difficult?

GN: There's always one, and this was a fight scene in the main corridor, a fifteen hundred foot long hallway. The battle was between the crew and the robot guards of the Cygnus. They were high in the air, on a catwalk, and the operators' vision inside the robots was limited—they had no peripheral vision at all. There were few safety harnesses, and the robots had to be walked out to the catwalk for a last look around before being suited-up, so that they would at least have a chance of staying on the track. There were stuntmen falling everywhere, men in robot suits—we spent days on that sequence, but miraculously nobody got hurt.

On another set, we were blowing all sorts of things into the air. The entire crew, about a hundred and twenty-five people, on the fringe of the action, were decked out in hardhats, glasses and goggles. They all stood around watching our totally *unprotected* and expensive cast getting knocked about with flying debris.

JS: Did you have any problems with theft, the way the **Star Trek** people have?

GN: Well, two of Peter's paintings were stolen right off the set. And they were key paintings which had to be matched in the live action for lighting and prop placement. Harrison came up with a quick substitute idea because we knew pretty much what they looked like. Luckily, it was also tied into a spectacular effect, a meteor crashing through the main corridor, so the fine details weren't terribly critical. In any case, we began rounding up all the paintings after that and locking them away—they should never have been scattered around the way they were.

JS: At least somebody appreciates movie production art.

GN: Yeah, and would I like to find him!

Lasers disappeared too. We made over 500 of the laser pistols. They have a very unique design. It's a kind of double laser that fits around the hand, with barrels on top and bottom and a grip in the center. Suddenly they all started disappearing; everybody was taking them for souvenirs.

JS: You've got to admit, they are nice mementos from the film.

GN: But they started to disappear *before* we even had a chance to use them.

JS: When will the film be ready for release?

GN: We dub in October, score in September, so everything should go out as scheduled in November. I think I've spent a thousand hours in the editing room already. I had a trailer on the stage, and if I had an hour or two between shots while the camera crew set-up, I would spend it with the editors. That way I kept up to date with the film and didn't have to go back to the beginning to put it together. That would have delayed things for months. Often I was needed on the miniatures stage at the same time. It was like juggling three basketballs on rollerskates. We've almost arrived at the final cut right now.

JS: Are you ready to start work on the sequel?

GN: No. One is enough for me. I'm not saying I wouldn't, but right now I'm just not particularly interested. Nobody will start seriously talking about a sequel for two years or so anyway. Even if everybody were killed in the film, they'd find a sequel in it—it would be financially foolish not to.

JS: The film's climax has been veiled in secrecy, but we've heard many rumors concerning the ending of **The Black Hole**. All of them involve the characters going into the vortex and resolving in surrealistic situations, such as becoming part of the fresco painting on the Sistine Chapel or the American flag, or just huddled on a mountaintop on prehistoric Earth. What's this all about?

GN: Oh yeah? Where do you hear these stories?

JS: Mostly from professional stool pigeons.

GN: I'll tell you a little secret about those rumors. Our publicity department starts them. We even drew up a variety of storyboard endings and filmed parts of them to throw up a smoke screen so that nobody knows the ending. The publicity people even hired someone to tour the science-fiction conventions promoting five different endings.

There is not, and never was, a definitive ending written. Even the credited screenwriters did not write the actual ending we have on the film. They took the story up to the last seven minutes and stopped.

JS: Did you write that seven minutes?

GN: I had something to do with it. But I also wrote several of the rumored endings as well.

JS: Okay. So you've taken the audience through an hour and a half of film, and built up a science-fiction mystery with a strong, personable cast. Everybody will scream bloody murder if you don't pay it off properly and show them what's inside the black hole.

GN: Oh yes. I agree totally. So let's consider a few concepts. In the first place, you probably can't pierce a black hole and survive. Most probably you would be squashed. Not very exciting or fulfilling for an audience.

JS: I think they might start braiding a noose for you.

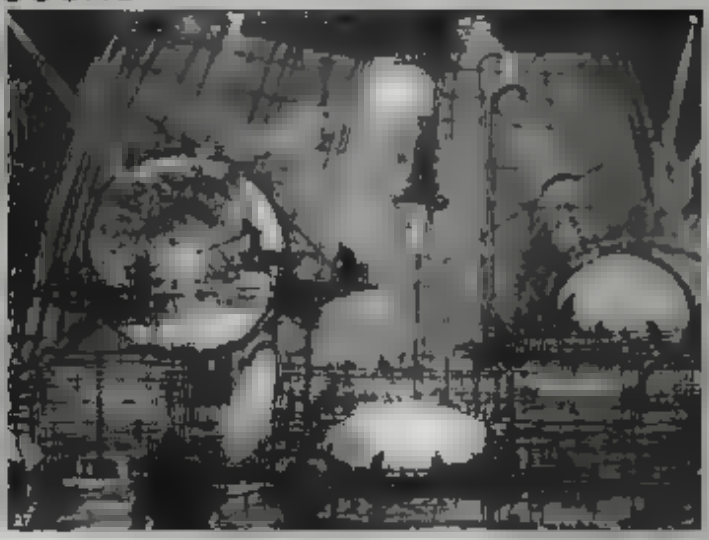
GN: Right. Then there's the theory that if you could go through a black hole, you would find a mirror universe on the other side, going back or standing still in time.

Now those are all things to consider *and then throw out* before coming to an idea you can believe in and sell to the audience. That combination of theories and possibilities is enough to keep the film's ending a *very* top secret affair.

JS: So you're not going to tell us what happens at the end, are you?

GN: Nope.

But remember, a lot of things can happen in seven minutes—and they do. I don't think anybody will be disappointed.●



PART THREE

THE ART OF PETER ELLENSHAW

THE BLA

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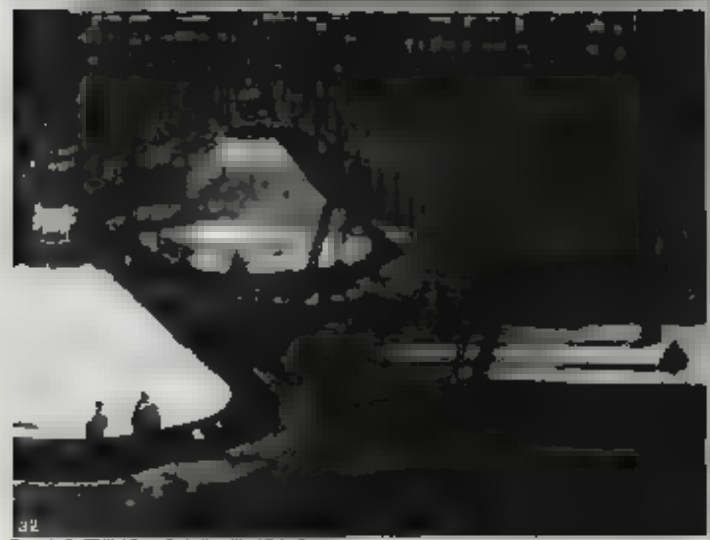

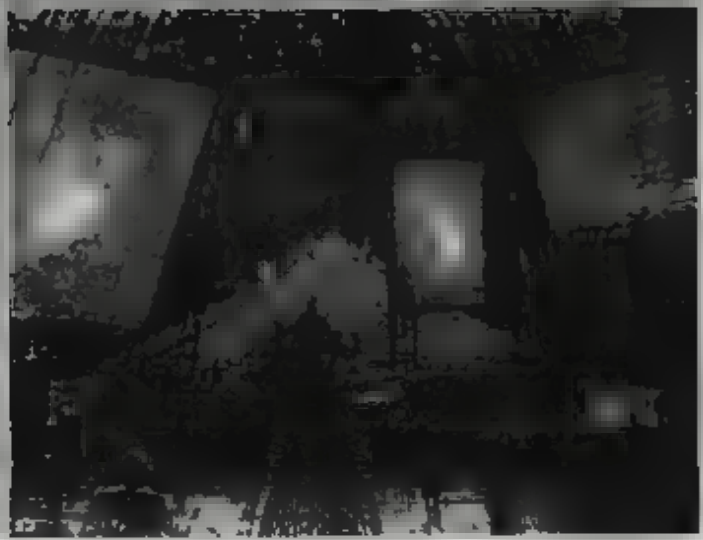

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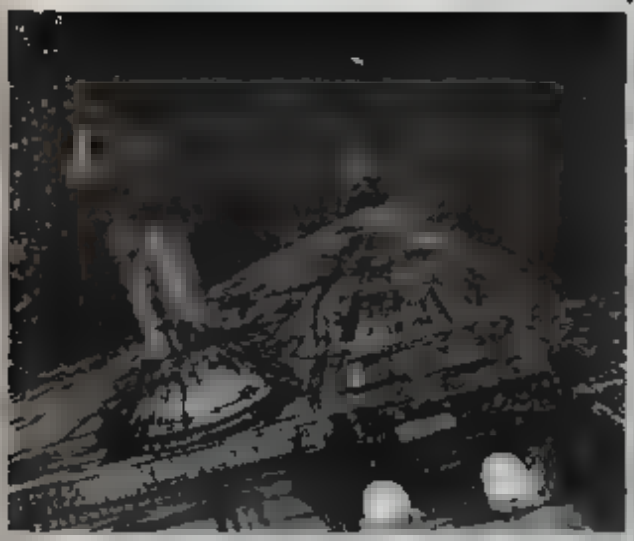

ICK HOLE

When The Black Hole finally comes to the screen in December viewers will be in for a real treat a science fiction film with a look that does not imitate **Star Wars** 2001 or even **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** instead they will find a new approach to the visual aspects of the hardware and effects, one that is as fascinating and believable

The man responsible for this style is Peter Ellenshaw a long time veteran of Disney and dozens of other larger than life movie-minded films. When **The Black Hole** was in the final stages he revealed some of those techniques for MEDIASCENE

This kind of film has always been a challenge, especially when it comes to the hardware decided that everyone seemed to be designing spaceships the same way alien Ellenshaw explained. The look has become firmly established now, but it is really just a contemporary designer's view of space mythology. I felt that by the time our picture takes place things will certainly have changed, gone beyond what is commonly referred as the high-tech look

I think that somewhere along the way somebody put slab sides on the spaceships to get an effect that everybody copied that way of thinking I believe that when we do get out in space it will be impractical but functional slabs on a ship usually because if something goes wrong like a meteor showers they'll just be torn off. Plus you don't see any point in why you would burden yourself with needless objects. I thought that it made more sense to construct the ship's exterior on the outside so that it could be repaired easily

Ellenshaw's concept for the Cygnus the key spaceship in **The Black Hole** has been described as a blend of the Crystal Palace from the Great Exhibition of London of 1851 and the Goldstone tracking station in the American desert. This is because the outer structure was first conceived as a series of massive plate glass windows with an intricate construction held together by an intricate network of steel supports that gave the giant ship a kind of greenhouse-in-outer-space appearance. There are even monorail transport pods that run along the outside of the Cygnus patterned after the outdoor elevator systems being used in many modern hotels. During its initial design stages the Cygnus was put into somewhat jaundiced perspective by **The Black Hole**'s producer Ron Miller with the comment it looks like an electric eel

The Black Hole is by no means Ellenshaw's first excursion into science-fiction and the fantastic. It was in 1931, at the age of twenty, he commenced with Percy Day (who pioneered the Korda process for the Kordas) that he could become a valuable assistant in the field of matte painting. His first assignment was for the Korda brothers Alexander, Vincent and Zoltan the pillars of the British film industry who produced many fantasy adventure movies before and during World War II. Ellenshaw became Day's assistant in visualizing breathtaking spectacles for virtually every Korda film throughout the 30s and 40s, from the flying carpeted wonders of **Thief of Bagdad** to a genuine escalator to paradise in **Stairway to Heaven**

One of his most important assignments was for **Things to Come** early in 1935 with Alexander Korda's **Shape of Things to Come** a grandiose production directed with great style by William Cameron Menzies. **Things to Come** showed mankind plunging into the ultimate war, its aftermath emerging into a scientific utopia some 200 years later. According to Menzies vision and Ellenshaw's paintings (of which there were literally dozens) the future was an art deco wonderland a seamlessly contoured and majestic world in every sense of the word. Giant flying wings carried hundreds of passengers, commuter ships shot into space and huge video like images were projected over an entire metropolis. The film has become a classic and many of the backgrounds are unforgettable in their opulent grandeur. Most of them were just paint on glass and that is what matte work is really all about

The Kordas were a strangely magnificent family of mountebanks, alternating the chores of directing, producing and set designing, and altogether creating many of the finest English films in their day. Ellenshaw returned from RAF service in 1946 to work on one of their most visually enchanting undertakings **Black Narcissus** in which he painted a remarkable series of glimpses of the Himalaya Mountains which almost stole the show from the players

This time Ellenshaw went beyond the role of assistant to prove he could stand alone as a highly skilled matte artist for films. Day and Ellenshaw were pioneers in their field, at least in Europe and were responsible for many of the finest color matte paintings ever seen in films enhancing scenes shot in sound stages with everything from deserts to fortresses of three-masted sailing ships to thematted cities of the Arabian Nights. Ellenshaw and the Kordas were destined to work with each other all contributing to visually express worlds beyond reality a relationship that would be a fitting prelude to Peter's career at Disney

By 1950, the public's appetite for escapist film fare was changing, and the Korda fantasy genre was being crowded out by the British economic situation. The war had crippled England in many ways and the money generated by American films shown in Great Britain was needed badly as many U.S. studios decided to spend their frozen revenue in England by making films here. MGM brought **Ivanhoe** to the British Isles and Ellenshaw was called upon to recreate ancient Rome. For Warner Brothers he painted the ports, harbor villages and fortresses in their production of **Captain Horatio Hornblower**

Disney entered the picture at this time because his distribution deal suggested the obvious financial advantages and Walt was considerably interested in entering the live action film field he sensed that he would have to expand beyond animated mice and ducks to survive and grow

The production designer for Disney's non-animated debut **Treasure Island**, called upon Ellenshaw to create "one or two mattes." If you're interested. They're paintings later including every exterior shot of the island in the film. Peter was firmly entrenched in the Disney organization and Walt believed in making almost [illegible] outdoor locations. For the next [illegible] years Disney and [illegible] location teams [illegible] in England, turning out **The Story of Robin Hood, The Sword and the Rose** and **Rob Roy**. All were period fantasy adventures and Peter found plenty of work painting faraway places

In 1954 when Disney moved **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea** back to the States Ellenshaw came along literally (logistically and spiritually). He designed the barnacle encrusted set for the matte shots and special effects and won the studio an Academy Award for his work (not to mention helping push the film into the realm of financial success

From that point on virtually any Disney production needing hand crafted visual enhancements received Peter's attention. Vintage Americana was a popular theme in the 50s and a host of mountains, rivers, plains and cities were molded into **Davy Crockett, The Great Locomotive Chase, Johnny Tremain, Old Yeller** and **Tonka**. In 1959 he [illegible] **Darby O'Gill and the Little People** so that all the matte painting work could be done in a controlled stage and shot [illegible] rather than photographed [illegible] a staggering technical concept had drained a Bronx electrical substation of power when the thousands [illegible] needed were switched on

Peter took time out from Disney in 1960 to paint another Rome again this time for Stanley Kubrick's **Spartacus**. He soon returned, almost entirely [illegible] for designing, supervising special effects and painting mattes for the next 15 years or [illegible] **Kidnapped, Sign of Zorro, Swiss Family Robinson, The Gnome-Mobile** and **The Love Bug**. In 1964 he received an Oscar for his inventive combination of paintings, live-action, animation and optical effects in **Mary Poppins**. Indeed every Disney film Ellenshaw touched was successful in large part thanks to the visual embellishment he lent them all but **Island at the Top of the World** which everyone agrees had too little story to hang the pictures onto

Somewhat depressed after Island and eager to devote himself to a career of serious painting, Peter Ellenshaw retired to his house in Ireland "I gave up film as I wanted to go on my own career and I've got a lot further I go on my painting"

Just because he decided to call it quits in film did not mean that films were through with Ellenshaw. For one thing he left behind on hand in the Disney matte department his son Peter Jr. who subsequently changed his name to Harrison Ellenshaw (I am told confusion Harrison, follower in his father's footsteps [illegible] both on science fiction work when he painted all 3 matte [illegible] in **Star Wars**. For **The Black Hole** 150 matte shots were planned, a new record which Harrison supervised and executed, aided by David Mat-

His name was Elric of Melniborne, an albino warrior-prince. His weapon was a malevolent black runic-sword that drank the souls of his enemies, be they sorcerer or sullen woman or wizard-king. Bob Gould has captured the imagery of this fantasy masterpiece in a beautiful print titled

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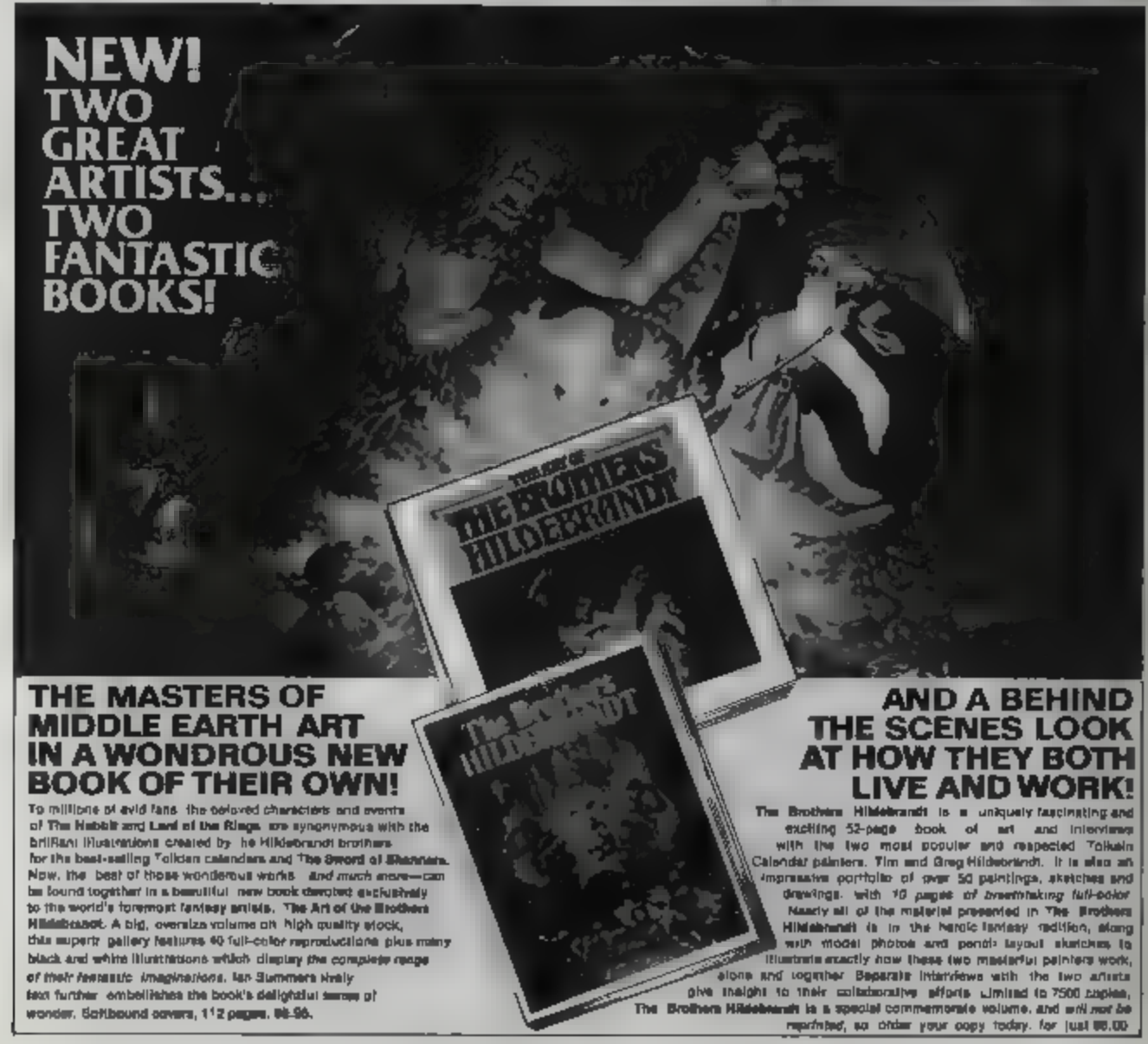

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tingly. In addition, producer Ron Miller lured the star Ellenshaw back into the fold at last time with an irresistible offer: complete control of both the special effects and the production design of the entire film, giving him a chance to make a definitive farewell statement for generations to follow.

The fact that **The Black Hole** is a labor of love with Peter is evident when one takes into consideration that he has made his mark in fine arts circles as a painter of land and seascapes priced between $7500 and $30,000. A selection of his work in this field will be showcased in November at New York's Hammer Galleries, his seventh presentation, following a spectacular retrospective of his 45 years in film held by the New York Museum of Modern Art in September.

Peter will not be producing any of the matte paintings for **The Black Hole** himself. Harrison is more than qualified for that task instead, he has rendered all of the preproduction illustrations which set the tone and texture of the film, and helped refine a new camera process system called ACES (Automated Camera Effects System), a computerized tracking system that allows a dozen different photo processes to be imprinted on film in a smooth, controlled fashion. It permits people to move, unrestricted, within a matte painting, and the camera can even follow them within a non-existent set to be painted later.

Such technical refinements are certainly important to the film's success, but it is the visual flamboyance that will impress audiences most and Peter Ellenshaw has given this aspect careful consideration in his many detailed paintings. Each one serves two purposes: they are design concepts that define the structure and style of their subjects, and they establish the essential atmosphere, dominated by cool reds and blues to capture the rolling turbulence of a black hole in space.

Harrison explains the approach being taken to visualize a scientific phenomenon that nobody knew about ten years ago. "I'm sure a real black hole would be a disappointment. I mean, in the darkness of outer space, how do you illustrate something that is nothing?

"We solved the problem by approaching space as not just a black field speckled with stars, but as a subtle glowing effect all its own. This was the black hole itself with accretion disc silhouetting the spacecraft. Consequently, the film will have a different look to it than what we're used to in space movies, in that there's not a single source hard-edged light effect. Rather, things are lit by a soft, massive glow of ethereal starlight.

"The hole itself has a lot of challenge to it. We took a great deal of time and effort to put it together just right. There were thirty or forty people working on that particular effect for over six months. And that's all we worked on.

Peter is reluctant to explain upon his creative concept of a black hole, preferring to let the pictures stand on their own. "I think my design of the black hole came by working through my sub conscious. This isn't necessarily a metaphysical thing, but when you think of space, how big is big? We all contain little galaxies within our selves."

All of the physical rendering of the matte paintings for **The Black Hole** has been handled by three men. Harrison Ellenshaw did a complete paintings, and Dana Gronquist rendered seven. The artist who carried the lion's share of the project was David Mattingly, whose introduction to this type of work came by way of his matte work on **The Further Adventures of Flash Gordon**. Only 23 years old, Mattingly is a graduate of the Colorado School of Art, Colorado State University and the California Art Center College of Design. He has also done record album covers for The Commodores and Rick James.

"Following the Flash Gordon material, almost two years ago, I called every studio in Hollywood to get work. Dave explains. "I knew I wanted to do matte paintings and Harrison Ellenshaw was the only one who returned my all encouraging. So I called him up every day and pestered him until he gave up and hired me.

"Actually, even though I did 31 paintings, much of the credit must go to Harrison. He spent a lot of time on the stages lining up the shots and sets with the real actors, then coming up to the studio to lay out every matte in detail. He was responsible for every facet of each painting, so when you hear that I only painted 14 mattes, it's not really an accurate reflection of his total contribution.

Altogether, there were 50 mattes, but of the 42 were full scale paintings. Most of the others were primarily specialized mattes designed for optical use and the blue screen process in relation to some of the full mattes. As for the hole itself, we wound up creating 15 or 20 full paintings, more than we had actually planned, because complications arising out of various angles and things

At one point, we seemed to run into a link. It was an eleven plate matte that normally took a whole day and a half to put together. It was a scene where the *Palomino* crew comes out of an elevator, sees the interior of the Cygnus, and the camera pans up to show the control room and outer space and some other details. Literally every element had to be artificially added with special effects, and it just took a long, long time to process. For some reason, we got hung up on that shot. A piece of tape was left on one of the glass paintings, another shot would be overexposed one time we even had a computer breakdown. Finally, after about seven days, we got the shot and everyone began praying until the next shot went through smoothly.

"We're still making last minute adjustments and shooting some very complicated special effects material in mid-October, but the footage I've seen so far is fantastic. This is just a period of tightening the entire structure and polishing the finished product for its release. I think all of our major problems are behind us."

Surprisingly, few of the people involved with **The Black Hole** are hard-core science-fiction fans. Harrison Ellenshaw explains this unusual situation simply. "Disney has always told stories that go beyond reality. We assume that this is a science-fiction film, but then so was **The Cat From Outer Space**. In many ways, **The Black Hole** is a story whose setting is in the far future. The characters, the plot and the locale, however, could just as easily have been done in another environment.

"I'm not really a science-fiction follower. I've admired *2001* for its effects and aesthetic qualities. *Star Wars* was a fun film. I don't know. I've been told, but haven't read any good science fiction. There's so much bad stuff around and it's fun you do!"

Two last artist deserves particular mention for his contributions to **The Black Hole**, even though his hiring came about quite accidentally, and in a moment of exasperation on the part of Peter Ellenshaw.

"There are some things I can't do," Peter explains with a grin, "and designing robots is simply not in my line. I found that out the hard way. I designed about 20 or 30 robots and finally got to where they were reminiscent of the Michelin tire trademark. The breaking point came to me when one of the effects men suggested to all our executives, 'Why don't we try putting some feathers on him?'

"I then suggested to Ron Miller that instead of continually rejecting my designs, we should bring in someone else. So George McGinnis came on the project and became responsible for V.I.N.Cent and Max and all the rest of the robots.

"Gary had come onto the project by this time and we'd both suffered through these robot problems. He was at least as frustrated about having to discarding many of my ideas. So when George and I finally agreed on the robot design, and they had this mock-up model made of clay which had already been used for casting duplicates -well, Gary and I went to work on it with a rubber hammer, and just pounded the daylights out of it. We had a great time doing it, too."

The undercurrent of perfection that impelled Peter to turn over a part of his duties to a more qualified creator and then look back at the object of his frustrations, is typical of the overall Disney attitude towards **The Black Hole**. As a corporate entity, they are taking a big chance in going beyond their own self-imposed and boundaries. They are also taking a chance in letting Peter Ellenshaw design their most expensive production to date, counter to the currently accepted style for spaceships. But underneath all, here is a positive effort to make a good film, to maintain the standards of quality which have been the hallmark of every Disney film.

Harrison explains the company's handling of their first PG-rated film: "The big difference in attitude is that **The Black Hole** is intended to appeal to a different audience than we are normally identified with. That was the reason we chose this subject matter in the first place, and with that thought in mind, we knew we weren't making a slapstick comic book affair for children only.

"My personal opinion is that it is a good film that will appeal to all people. There is a lot of visual fun stuff for the children, and at the same time, there are elements of intrigue and mystery that will pull on another level entirely.

"The story has gone through a lot of changes since it was first suggested in 1974. A lot of writers think it will be difficult for people not to compare it to many of the other pictures in the genre, but there's nothing we can do about that. I can remember walking out of *Dr. Strangelove* and overhearing a lady sitting behind me say to her husband, 'Well, it's certainly no *My Fair Lady*.' Now, this is certainly a long-shot comparison, but it does prove that people can come up with the craziest associations about movies. Fortunately, we're not trying to be another *Star Wars* or **Close Encounters**, so we don't have to worry about being accused of copying their style.

Peter Ellenshaw closes the book on **The Black Hole** story with the observation that: "Nobody makes films the way Disney does. People really don't know what to expect from us on this one because all the publicity has emphasized our departure from the typical children's product. I should think that people will approach **The Black Hole** with a clean but curious mind that isn't boggled down with all the previous pictures -Disney's or anyone else's.

"You may not believe it, but that's exactly what I intend to do when I watch it this Christmas."

THE NEW MARVEL INDEX

CAPTAIN AMERICA

[illegible] all the names, dates and [illegible] data listed for Cap's solo [illegible] adds in [illegible] Cap's own title, the **Tales of Suspense** [illegible] Annuals, Treasury Editions and [illegible] 350s Yellow Claw books are [illegible] A [illegible] highlighting the Legend of Captain America by Stanley Kubey and Jack Kirby and [illegible] is included. A short [illegible] and [illegible] is provided.

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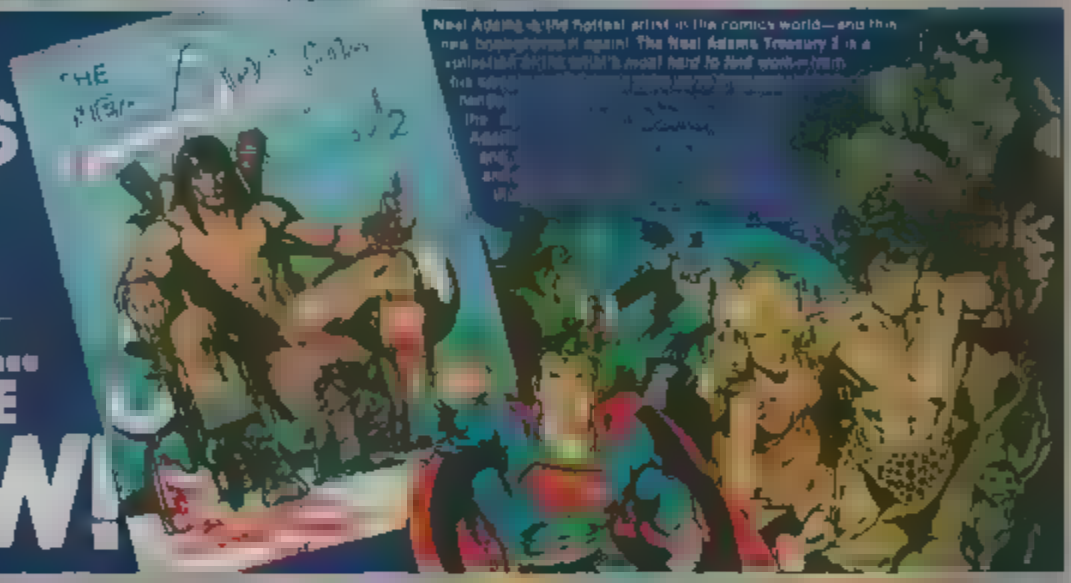

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1) Tom Baker in [illegible] 2) [illegible]

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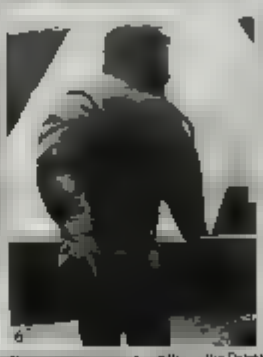

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7) William Hartnell and the Daleks 12) Tom Baker mind-wrestles the Morbius Monster 13) [illegible]

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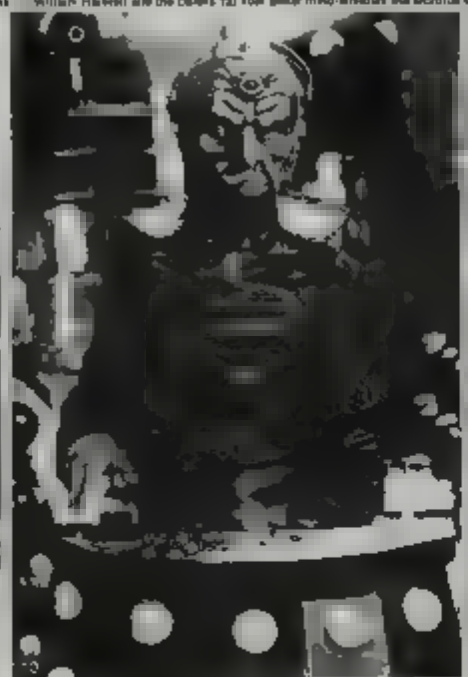

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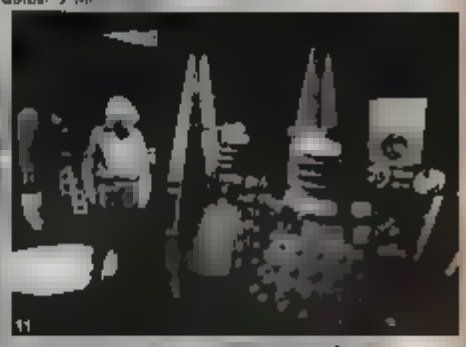

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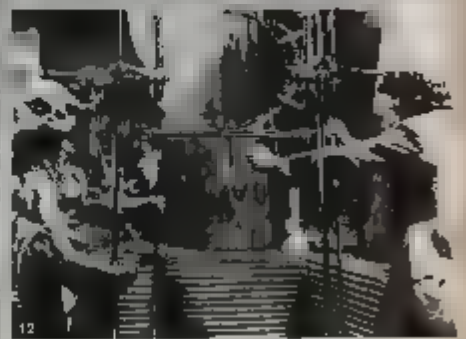

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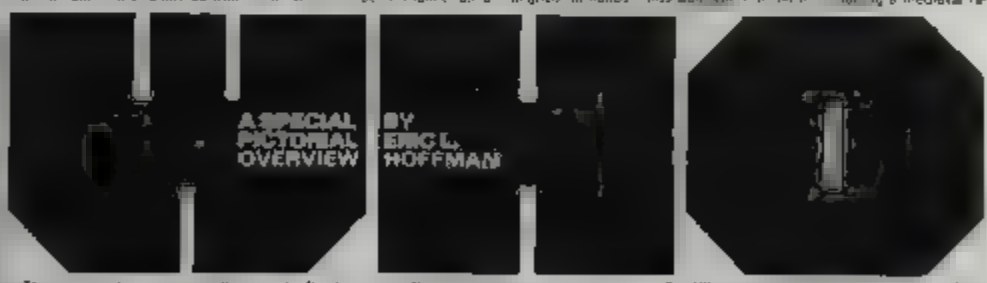

It was November 23, 1963

A remarkable event occurred on British television channel BBC-1. From a modest beginning with an audience of 7 million viewers and a shoestring budget in the range $4,000, this off-beat and often whimsical science fiction/fantasy series has captivated, thrilled and delighted fans of all ages from Great Britain to the United States.

What, or more precisely who was it? Doctor Who, of course.

The show was born when Sidney Newman (the newly-appointed head of Drama for the BBC) and Donald Wilson (director of serials and series) got together to create a new Saturday afternoon serial that would appeal to youngsters of the best of the family as well as

[illegible] performance as a

[illegible] Sydney Bromley

[illegible] Verity Lambert

[illegible] David Whitaker

[illegible] series script editor. Besides getting cooperation from the various technical departments paying writers getting actors to work for low fees, one of Lambert's main problems was finding an actor to portray the Doctor. The film "The Sporting Life," brought veteran actor William Hartnell to her attention

[illegible] evidence in some quarters of the BBC. One executive is reported to have said: "... can only predict disaster. How can this crazy fellow who travels all over the galaxy using a London Police Box for a spacecraft last more than a dozen episodes? How indeed!

As the show began to take form Verity Lambert became its first producer while David Whitaker became its series script editor. Besides getting cooperation from the various technical departments paying writers getting actors to work for low fees, one of Lambert's main problems was finding an actor to portray the Doctor. The film "The Sporting Life," brought veteran actor William Hartnell to her attention

[illegible] performance as a

[illegible] Sydney Bromley

[illegible] Hartnell was best known for his film roles as tough-guy characters. Miss Lambert arranged a meeting with the actor, but Hartnell was reportedly reluctant to become involved in a children's TV show. Then his agent is said to have convinced him that it was just the kind of part he had been wanting to do.

Hartnell recalls, "The moment this brilliant young producer started telling me about Dr. Who, was hooked. It may look like hindsight now but I knew just knew that the series was going to be an enormous success. I remember telling Verity at the start: 'This is going to run for five years!'" His powers of prophecy were correct, but even Hartnell couldn't have been more correct he would be.

Dr. Who made its debut with the four-episode "An Unearthly Child" introducing the series' original main characters, the Doctor and his three companions: his grandaughter Susan (Carole Ann Ford) and two unwilling passengers on board the Tardis, high school teachers Barbara Wright (Jacqueline Hill) and Ian Chesterton (William Russell). The story had the two instructors quite curious about Susan's background, due to her brilliance in some subjects and disorientation in others. Their curiosity led them to a junkyard in Totter's Lane and the discovery that "home" is what looks like an old blue Police Box. Their intrusion into the domain of Susan's grandfather "soul" is in their being whisked into the Time/Space Vortex before the Doctor is convinced to return them to Earth. But the controls that guide the Tardis to the proper time and place are in need of repair. They've returned to Earth, the Earth of 100,000 BC!

The audience for the first story was not one that would increase greatly during that make-or-break season. The show had debuted in the wake of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Not exactly a good omen. The new episode would change all that.

"The Dead Planet" was a seven-part thriller by Terry Nation, who was generally known for comedy. As first Nation told his agent to turn the offer down, but, upon reconsidering, decided to accept. Their comedian Eric Sykes had an assignment for Nation but he had to go to Sweden to work on it. Nation wrote the Who script within a short seven days - and on the seventh he went to Sweden. The script was a classic.

Hideous machine-like creatures. They are ageless, moving on a round base. They have no human features. A long metal shaft acts as an eye. Arms with mechanical grabs or hands. They communicate by a [illegible] to their [illegible] script for Dr. Who's most popular monsters: the Daleks!

BBC designers Raymond Cusick, Jack Kine and Bernard Wilkie came up with designs that gave the Daleks their pepper-pot look. The first episode of the story was telecast on December 25 1963. It was quite a Christmas present. Terry Nation recalled afterward: "It was a good scene beginning and, at the end of it, in the last frame of the picture, we saw a bit of a Dalek, and the studio started to ring, people say ing, 'Christ what is that thing?'"

"The Dead Planet" triggered off a national phenomenon. England went Dalek happy. A total wave of Dalek merchandise materialized. Two movies were made about the Daleks, with Peter Cushing as the Doctor. The BBC had a hit on their hands - so did Nation, who owns the rights on the Daleks. Despite his other successes (including the popular BBC space-opera Blake's 7), Nation's fine with his monstrous 'children' is as strong as ever. "Life with the Daleks has not been without problems," he once noted. "Their continued existence means that I find it impossible to write another successful monster into Dr. Who. Nobody has ever killed off their brainchild as thoroughly as have annihilated mine unless it was Conan Doyle trying to rid himself of Sherlock Holmes."

The Daleks' success set the future course for the series. By the end of the fourth season, the historical sagas were a thing of the past.

Then William Hartnell decided to leave the show in 1965 (the reasons aren't fully known, although some sources cite his health as one of the factors). Writers Kid Pedler and Gerry Davis came up with a gimmick that enabled Hartnell to leave the series gracefully.

The gimmick was the Doctor's ability to "regenerate" his body (that is, replace his old, worn-out body with a new, different, vigorous one). By the end of the last

[illegible] script in simple play from time to time when thinking) and his 500 Year Diary.

One of the factors that has kept the series fresh throughout the years has been the different interpretations of the Doctor by the four actors who have played the character so far.

Troughton's version has been called "the cosmic hobo" due to his appearance and off-beat, humorous aspects. Troughton learned his craft at the Embassy School of Acting and the Leighton Rollins School. He served with the Royal Navy during WWII (getting his own command after the invasion of Normandy) before returning to acting after his discharge in 1945. He was working on "The Wild Geese" in Ireland when the BBC approached him about becoming the new Doctor. At first Troughton (who watched the show with his children) was reluctant not sure that the part was right for him. The BBC debated Boon afterward he took the role.

With the conclusion of the sixth season, Troughton decided to move on to other things. He went out in a blaze of glory in the ten-episode classic "The War Games," which has its own unique niche in Dr. Who history in that it revealed his origin as a runaway from the planet Gallifrey and its people the Time Lords. Highly advanced able to journey through time and space and regenerate their bodies (no more than twelve times, however), the Time Lords used their powers and technology to monitor and observe events in the universe. They also followed a strict rule of non-involvement even when cosmic evil threatened.

It was this attitude that caused the Doctor to steal a Tardis in for repairs (thereby explaining its malfunctions) and begin his travels. Captured and brought to trial by the Time Lords after his experiences with the evil War Lords, he was charged with stealing the Tardis and violating the Non-Interference

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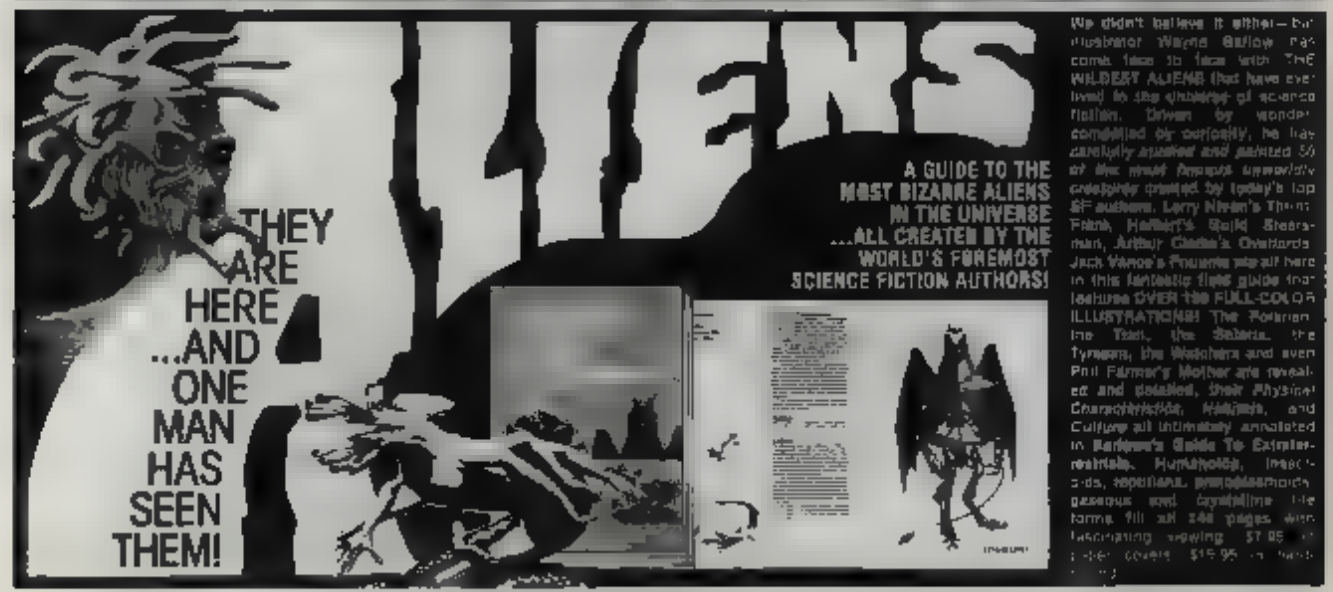

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law. His defense speech made the Judges realize that they couldn't ignore evil that threatened the universe. Instead of destruction, the Doctor would be exiled to 20th century Earth and the secret of the Tardis taken from him. When he protested that he was too well known on Earth and would be vulnerable, the Time Lords began the regeneration change once more.

Jon Pertwee stepped into the Doctor's shoes with the seventh season. The tall white-haired multi-talented performer was already known in the realm of light entertainment as well as having appeared in nearly every medium. Pertwee had been featured in the radio series, **The Navy Lark**, when told of Troughton's decision. When it was suggested that Pat was in for the part of the Doctor, the actor dismissed the idea. Nevertheless he and his agent confidant Peter Bryant, he shave a disguise, try and read the series shortlist (the immediate first choices) of actors being considered for the role. Pertwee's name was on it - at the very top. That did.

Pertwee's Doctor was a man of action, ready and able to engage in hand-to-claw combat with the show's monsters. Actually he was one of the few who armed beings to master the martial arts form of Venusian Aikido (just how many arms do those Venusians have? His taste in clothing leaned towards the elegantly eccentric. He loved gadgets and drove a souped up Edwardian roadster dubbed 'Bessie'. He was prepared for mechanical emergencies with his trusty screwdriver.

Doctor 3 served as the scientific advisor to UNIT (United Nations Intelligence Taskforce), formed to combat alien invasions of Earth. UNIT and its senior officer, Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge Stewart had been introduced during the Troughton period and would remain until the end of the fourth Doctor. Nicholas Courtney was a perfect choice for the Brigadier, his military mind coping with the Doctor's unorthodox ways of getting things done. Sgt. Benton (John Levene) and Captain Mike Yates (Richard Franklyn) would provide able assistance until UNIT ended its phased out of the series six seasons later.

A memorable character introduced during the Pertwee era was The Master, a renegade Time Lord who lusted for power and delighted in chaos. Roger Delgado played the satanic looking heavy with relish and won a following of his own. He made life hell for the Doctor throughout the eighth season and in various stories until Delgado's tragic death in a car accident in June 1973.

On Dr. Who's tenth anniversary fans were given a season opening that has become a legend. In 'The Three Doctors', a summit meeting of the title actors, William Hartnell in ill health for some time, returned as the original Time Lord, and Patrick Troughton again donned the garb of the 'cosmic hobo' to join Pertwee's third Doctor. The story saw Pertwee's exile ended and the Tardis restored to full operational (but still malfunctioning) status. The show also marked William Hartnell's last appearance as an actor. He passed away in April of 1975. He once declared: "I think that I live to be ninety a little of the magic of **Doctor Who** will still cling to me."

At the end of the eleventh season viewers saw Jon Pertwee's Doctor dying in the last episode of 'Planet of the Spiders'. His body riddled with radiation from a battle with the mutated arachnids of Metebelis III. As his friends watched in awe, the Doctor under went another transformation.

Tom Baker literally swooped down upon the show's audience at the start of the twelfth season, unleashing a new brand of manic enthusiasm to the character. His Cheshire Cat grin, mop of curly hair, 6' 3" frame, wide-brimmed floppy hat, off-beat clothing, long multi-colored scarf, 4 foot long, scrumptious (according to one report) and fondness for jelly babies have given the series fans. The Doctor has never been the same since.

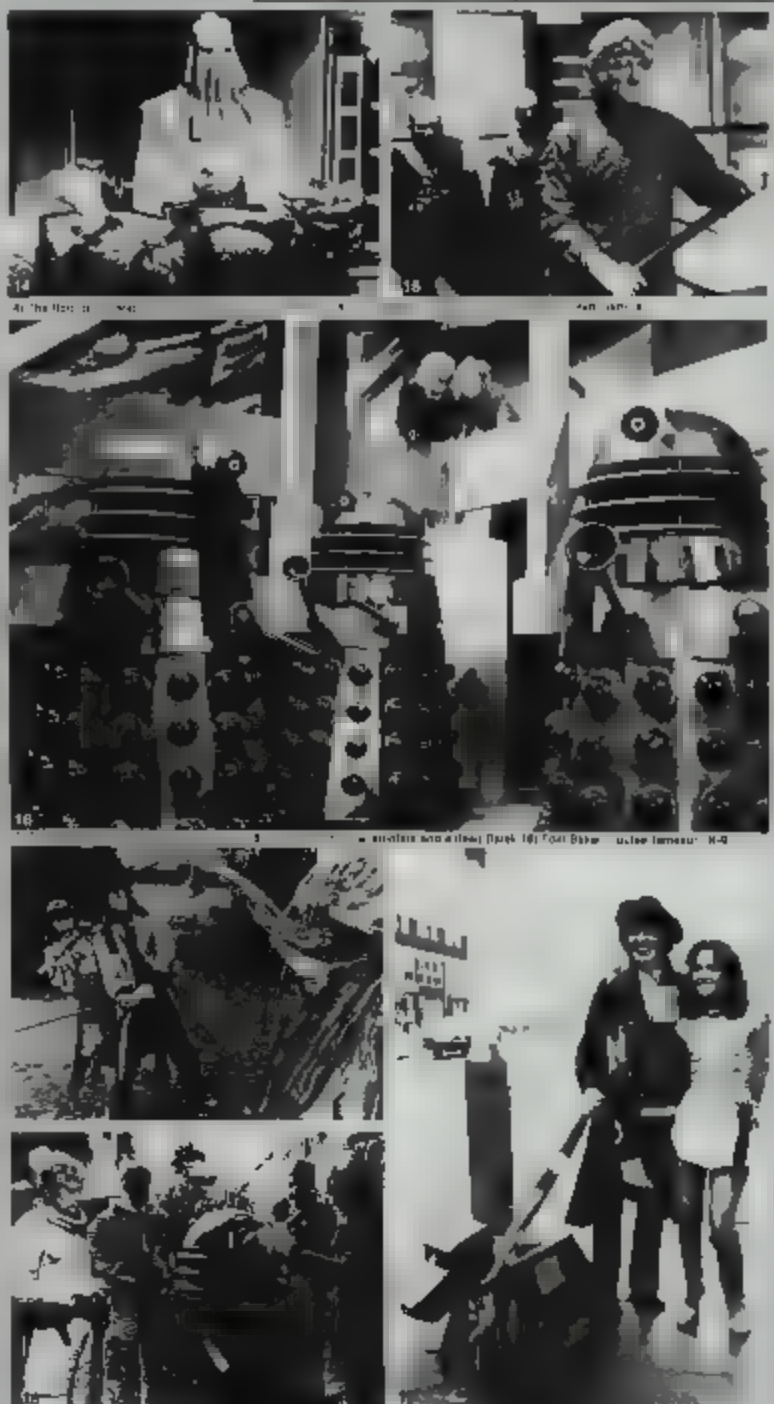
Liverpool-born Baker had been involved in amateur dramatics since age 15, when he was invited to join the Abbey Theatre, though his parents refused their permission. When a monk lectured at his school, Baker intrigued with the "heroic aspects" of monastic life, entered a monastery at 16, but left six years later. "I was bored," he said, and was promptly drafted. He served his time in the Army in Malaysia, where he was "violently keen on KP (Kitchen Police to you). He was the platoon nut."

He had really paid his dues by the time he was spotted in a publicside review and invited by Sir Laurence Olivier to join the National Theatre. Olivier later recommended Baker for his first film role, the hypnotic holy man Rasputin in the lavish **Nicholas and Alexandra**. But it was his performance as the evil Prince Koura in Ray Harryhausen's **Golden Voyage of Sinbad** that interested Bill Slater, BBC Head of Serials. Slater got staffers Barry Letts and Terrance Dicks "to take a look at the evil sorcerer who cast his sinister spells with style" and a gobsmacked Baker describes as "a mixture of Bel Mezgah and Roman Catholic Mass, an uneasy alliance."

"I was terribly out of work when I got the Dr Who job," Baker recalled in a news story. "I was temporarily working on a building site when the BBC approached me. A few weeks later some of the men went out to buy the 'Daily Standard' and there was my picture on the front page. They couldn't believe it - their cement mixer becoming Dr Who!"

Since the beginning, the Doctor has been accompanied by numerous companions. Susan Ian and Barbara while the first and after Susan's departure at the end of the second Dalek adventure. Dalek invasion of Earth, a succession of companions from the past present and future joined the Doctor in his exploits. Space doesn't allow including all of them, but a partial roll call follows. Vicki (Maureen O'Brien), the survivor of a space expedition in 2493; Katarina (Adrienne Hill), young lady from the Trojan War; Dodo Chaplet (Jackie Lane), a mod young lady who entered the Tardis thinking it was a Police Box. Polly (Anneke Wills), secretary to the inventory of WOTAN, a power-mad computer. Jamie McCrimmon (Frazer Hines), one of the most popular of the Doctor's companions. Victoria Waterfield (Deborah Watling), a young lady from the Victorian era whose father was killed in a battle with the Daleks. Zoe Harriet (Wendy Padbury), astrophysicist on a space station in the future, leaky-boppersh Jo Grant (Katy Manning), the Doctor's personal assistant. Page-lance journalist Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen), she third of the Pertwee companions. Harry Sullivan (Ian Marter), a doctor on loan from the Royal Navy to UNIT and Leela (Louise Jameson), a warrior maid of the Sevateem tribe.

Tom Baker's tenure as the Doctor has seen the introduction of the Time Lord's non-human companions. The first was K-9, the remarkable dog-shaped mobile-computer-bank-cum-assistant. The creation of writers Bob Baker and David Martin. Actor John Leeson had, until the end of the 16th season, given K-9 its distinctive voice while visual effects man Ian Scoones provided its physical form. There have been two K-9s in the series, the first, K-9 mk I, fails with Louise Jameson at the end of the 15th season. The second, K-9 mk II, was a duplicate built by the Doctor and has been with Baker's time/space wanderer ever since (a Time Lord's



"ARIOCH! I GIVE YOU BLOOD AND SOULS! AID YOUR SERVANT, ELRIC OF MELNIBONE!"

Of all the barbarians to emerge from the savage world of sword and sorcery fiction, only Michael Moorcock's albino warrior Elric can rival the fascination and fury of Conan. Just as Frazetta has created the unforgettable imagery of Robert E. Howard's most dynamic hero, so too has Michael Whelan visualized Elric in two, new high-quality prints 18x24" on heavy stock. **Sea of Fate** features the prince of Melnibone brandishing the soul-drinking runesword in the prow of a hell-bound ship. **Bane of the Black Sword** pits the timeless barbarian against a legion of the damned. Both full-color prints capture the eerie mood of the original stories. $5 each, or both for $9. Whelan's best work

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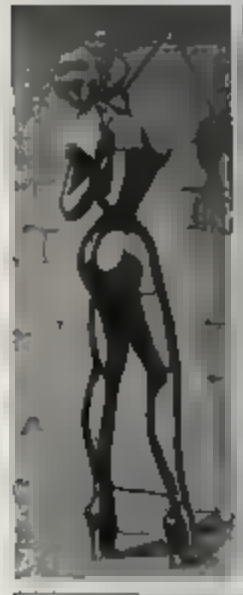

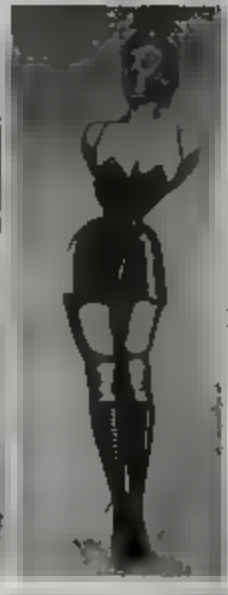

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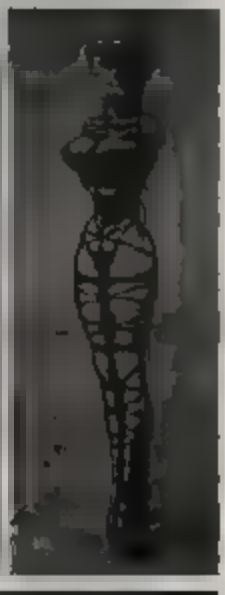

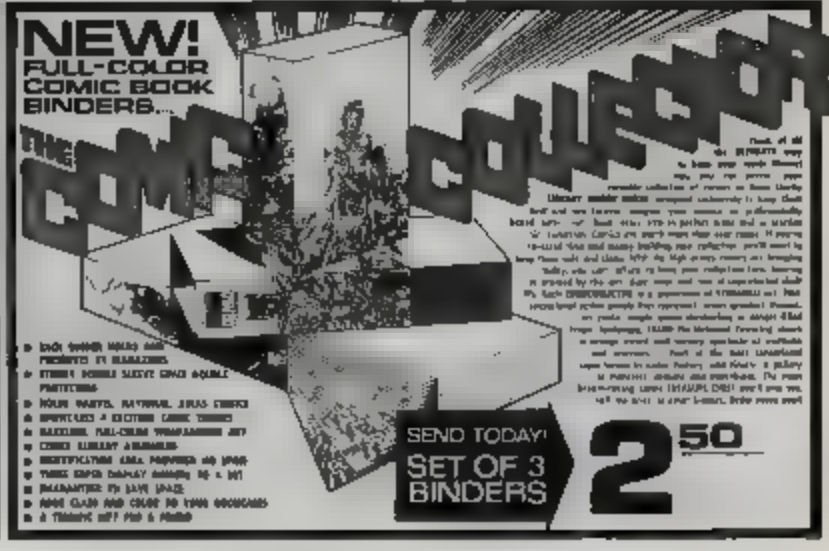

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least friend?).

The second companion holds a unique distinction: she is the first alien humanoid to travel on a regular basis in the Tardis. Her name is Romanadvoratrelundar — Lady Romana for short, a graduate of the Time Lord Academy sent to assist the Doctor in the six adventure epic quest for the segments of the "Key To Time." Originally, Romana was played by Mary Tamm during the series' 18th season, but her dissatisfaction with the way the character was being written grew until, at the conclusion of the shooting of the season's final story, "The Armageddon Factor," she announced she was leaving the show. A new Romana has helped open the latest (17th) season in the person of Lalla Ward, an actress who had portrayed the fairy doll of Princess Astra in the previous episode (believe it or not, she turned out to be one of the segments of the Key!).

Costume wise, the new Romana started off in a variation of the Doctor's own unorthodox outfit (albeit in pink right down to a copy of Baker's long scarf [courtesy of costume designer June Hudson]).

During its 16th season, Dr Who reached its 15th anniversary, its 100th story "Shrine of Blood" and its 500th episode (part of "Armageddon Factor"). Triple play.

The popularity and longevity the Doctor enjoys are impossible to deny. The character has been utilized in almost every popular medium imaginable. Two feature films, **Dr. Who and the Daleks** and **Daleks - Invasion of Earth 2150 AD** were made. On December 16, 1974 fans got another special Christmas present when a stage play, **7 Keys to Doomsday** (written by staffer Terrance Dicks) opened for four weeks at London's Adelphi Theatre. Trevor Martin portrayed the Doctor (apparently a new regeneration from the Pertwee-style of Time Lord), while Wendy Padbury Zoe of the Troughton era, renewed her acquaintance with the Doctor's adventures by portraying Jenny, one of two young people who become involved in the time traveler's latest battle with — what else? — the Daleks and the monstrous Cybermen.

There have been recordings made of the show's classic theme by Ron Grainer, the man responsible for the theme of the classic Prisoner series, a special record by Jon Pertwee entitled **Who is the Doctor** and even a story record put out in 1978 by Decca Records Argo Division. Entitled **Dr Who and the Pescatons**, the disc starred Tom Baker (who also narrated the story), Elizabeth Sladen as Sarah Jane and Bill Mitchell as Zor, leader of the monstrous Pescatons. Most mind-blowing of all the records is the disco version of the theme, entitled, simply, **Dr. Who** (fans have nicknamed it "Disco-Doctor"), performed by a group called Mankind. It made the British record charts and is reported to be a hard to find item.

Over 50 novelizations of the Doctor's adventures in his various incarnations have been published by Target Books (Pinnacle Books has published the American editions), as well as Dr. Who annuals (there have also been annuals for the Daleks), magazines, coloring books, dolls, jigsaw puzzles and trading cards. The list is astounding and there will obviously be more to come. There is even a Tardis bank, a battery-powered Dalek, and a model of K-9.

American viewers have only been able to see the first three seasons of Jon Pertwee's adventures and the first four seasons of Tom Baker's exploits. Unfortunately, these are all that Time-Life has purchased for syndication in this country.

Marvel Comics has taken an interest in the maverick Time Lord, and a Dr. Who weekly magazine is due on British newsstands at any time. It will feature a comic strip plus articles and pictures. U.S. fans will have to be content with a planned monthly mag which will only feature the comic strips. Marvel evidently feels that American audiences wouldn't be interested in articles on the shows (they've got to be kidding!).

As with any popular series, a fan club has sprung up for Dr. Who, known as the **Doctor Who Appreciation Society**. This BBC-recognized organization has kept the flag waving with tremendous fervor. They have held three Who-conventions (known as Panopticons) aimed for the great meeting hall of the Time Lords on Gallifrey), and released two publications: a monthly newsletter called **The Celestial Toyroom** and an excellent magazine entitled **Tardis**.

Until recently, the club handled memberships from American and Canadian Who fans, but the response turned out to be so overwhelming that a North American branch of the DWAS is being set up in U.S. and Canadian fans.

Currently, Tom Baker has entered his sixth season as the Doctor, accompanied by Romana and K-9 (K-9's voice, with actor David Brierly taking over [although K-9 will reportedly start the season suffering from "space laryngitis"]). Already, the first of the new adventures has hit the airwaves: "Destiny of the Daleks" pitting the Doctor against his old enemies and introducing a new alien race, the Movellans. Other stories announced so far are "City of Death" (shot entirely in Paris; what is the connection between a spaceship that crashed millions of years ago and the Mona Lisa?), "The Creature From the Pit" and "Nightmare in Eden."

David Whitaker wrote these words for the Doctor which contain the magic that has permeated his most unique of fantastic-oriented programs:

"Can you imagine silver leaves waving above a pool of liquid gold containing singing fishes? Twin suns that circle and fall in a rainbow heaven, another world in another sky? If you'd like to come with me, I'll show you all this — and it will be. I promise you, the oddest part of it all. Come with me and you will see wonders that no human has ever dreamt possible. Or stay behind and regret your staying until the day you die."

The Doctor continues his travels aboard the Tardis, and millions of fans have never regretted joining him for all these years.

know haven't I. ●

Eric L. Hoffman

THE COMPLETE DOCTOR WHO SERIES CHECKLIST

A. WILLIAM HARTNELL (11/23/63-12/26/66)
1 AN UNEARTHLY CHILD
2 THE DEAD PLANET
3 THE EDGE OF DESTRUCTION
4 THE ROOF OF THE WORLD
5 THE SEA OF DEATH
6 THE TEMPLE OF EVIL
7 STRANGERS IN SPACE
8 A LAND OF FEAR
9 PLANET OF GIANTS
10 WORLD'S END
11 THE POWERFUL ENEMY
12 THE SLAVE TRADERS
13 THE WEB PLANET
14 THE LION
15 THE SPACE MUSEUM
16 THE EXECUTIONERS
17 THE WATCHER
18 FOUR HUNDRED DAWNS
19 MISSION TO THE UNKNOWN
20 TEMPLE OF SECRETS
21 THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS
22 WAR OF GOD
23 THE STEEL SKY
24 THE CELESTIAL TOYROOM
25 A HOLIDAY FOR THE DOCTOR
26 THE SAVAGES
27 THE WAR MACHINES
28 THE SMUGGLERS
29 THE TENTH PLANET

B. PATRICK TROUGHTON (11/5/66-6/21/69)
THE POWER OF THE DALEKS
2 THE HIGHLANDERS
3 THE UNDERWATER MENACE
4 THE MOONBASE
5 THE MACRA TERROR
6 THE FACELESS ONES
7 THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS
8 THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN
9 THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN
10 THE ICE WARRIORS
11 THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD
12 THE WEB OF FEAR
13 FURY FROM THE DEEP
14 THE WHEEL IN SPACE
15 THE DOMINATORS
16 THE MIND ROBBER
17 THE INVASION
18 THE KROTONS
19 THE SEEDS OF DEATH
20 THE SPACE PIRATES
21 THE WAR GAMES

20 William Hartnell as the First Doctor

C. JON PERTWEE (1/3/70-6/8/74)
1 SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE
2 THE AUTONS
3 THE AMBASSADORS OF DEATH
4 INFERNO
5 THE TERROR OF THE AUTONS
6 THE MIND OF EVIL
7 THE CLAWS OF AXOS
8 COLONY IN SPACE
9 THE DAEMONS
10 THE DAY OF THE DALEKS
11 THE CURSE OF PELADON
12 THE SEA DEVILS
13 THE MUTANTS
14 THE TIME MONSTER
15 THE THREE DOCTORS
16 CARNIVAL OF MONSTERS
17 FRONTIER IN SPACE
18 PLANET OF THE DALEKS
19 THE GREEN DEATH
20 THE TIME WARRIOR
21 INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS
22 DEATH TO THE DALEKS
23 THE MONSTER OF PELADON
24 PLANET OF THE SPIDERS

D. TOM BAKER (12/28/74-)
1 ROBOT
2 THE ARK IN SPACE
3 THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT
4 GENESIS OF THE DALEKS
5 THE REVENGE OF THE CYBERMEN
6 TERROR OF THE ZYGONS
7 PLANET OF EVIL
8 PYRAMIDS OF MARS
9 THE ANDROID INVASION
10 THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS
11 THE SEEDS OF DOOM
12 THE MASQUE OF MANDRAGORA
13 THE HAND OF FEAR
14 THE DEADLY ASSASSIN
15 THE FACE OF EVIL
16 THE ROBOTS OF DEATH
17 THE TALONS OF WENG-CHIANG
18 HORROR OF FANG ROCK
19 THE INVISIBLE ENEMY
20 IMAGE OF THE FENDAHL
21 THE SUN MAKERS
22 UNDERWORLD
23 THE INVASION OF TIME
24 THE RIBOS OPERATION
25 THE PIRATE PLANET
26 THE STONES OF BLOOD
27 THE ANDROIDS OF TARA
28 THE POWER OF KROLL
29 THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR
30 THE DESTINY OF THE DALEKS
31 CITY OF DEATH
32 THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

SWORDS 0

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F HEAVEN

Elric's Queen of the Ethran my beloved. *For her love, I drew mankind* was Erekose, *the Eternal Champion.*

That's the way it begins — and now it ends too but most Michael Moorcock readers will probably have that figured out. Unlike my other graphic novels **Empire** and **The Stars My Destination**, both of which were laid out for me, this one is all Chaykin — and I'm putting my reputation on the line with it — it's called **The Swords of Heaven, the Flowers of Hell**.

For the uninitiated, the hero is John Daker, a 20th century American who is plagued with memories of other incarnations (Elric Corum, Hawkmoon, Cornelius, Erekose) and a relentless search for his lost love and the Eternal City Tanelorn. This book is a sequel to **Silver Warriors** and **Phoenix in Obsidian**, and ties in with the final volume of the Eternal Champion cycle **The Quest for Tanelorn**.

The project really began in October 1975, when Moorcock was visiting the States. We got together and have been in fairly constant communication since. As our relationship grew so did the idea for the book, but for one reason or another it lay fallow for some time. Finally Michael introduced me to his agent, we worked out the deal on paper, and now we're partners in **Swords of Heaven**.

The idea was to create an original story with an original character instead of doing an adaptation. Still it had to tie into the previous Eternal Champion books, so Michael developed another incarnation for John Daker.

The situation was unique because it gave me the opportunity to do a new character yet one who had a set of precedents: the famous black sword, the quest background, and Moorcock's heroic morality. He submitted a treatment for me to work from much like a Marvel Comics outline. It broke down very well, but why not? Moorcock wrote comics when he was young, Kit Carson and some Burroughs material. He loves the form, and claims it's where he got most of his training.

My first job was to break the treatment down into a 54-page book. No problems there, but it took about a week or two to get into writing the text and dialogue.

I reread all his Champion books, and took a first person approach with Swords.

The next step was to cast the characters and design the costumes. I had to create three basic milieus, but I didn't want to do another sword & sorcery book with jockstraps and loincloths. I based the highly civilized culture on Florentine Italy gave the hero's people a kind of Celtic/Samurai look, and cut the barbarian race in [illegible] tanned leathers and painted theirs.

I used a Burt Lancaster likeness for the hero, taking it from the early years of **The Crimson Pirate** and **Brute Force** when he was all rough and wore that pained, hemmed expression. I cast Sophia Loren and Charlotte Rampling in the female leads, and used Peter O'Toole and Roy Scheider in supporting roles.

The art took two and a half months to complete — pencilled two or three pages a day doing it rough pencils without any reference whatsoever and traced it the entire 54 pages in a single day. On the average, there are three illustrations per page — a total reversal for an artist who was once categorized as needing ten panels on a page to tell a story. Personally I find it wasteful of both energy and space. It cheats the reader by giving him great instead of serious. It breaks up an idea and dilutes it. There's still panel-to-panel continuity, but it's a bit more sophisticated than what can be found in ordinary comics.

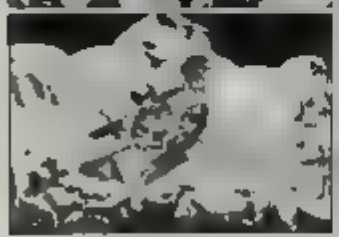
The story itself simply can't be told in small pictures. I believe that action and violence are important in sword & sorcery adventure and little panels only contain physical motion. Swords has an illustrative approach, except for a couple choreographed sequence during a dueling scene.

The story takes Daker from present day America and plunges him into a world of desolation and terror. He immediately engages in combat with a race of savage barbarians who dwell in a land they call Hell. One of the creatures he encounters is not unlike an immense flying mantis ray which comes from a place known as Heaven. The haunted borderlands between the two areas are the Dream Marches, and the people there recognize him as their hereditary lord, Clan of Clan Gai.

He learns that the opposing forces have broken the peace of a thousand years and are going to war with the Dream Marches as their battleground. As Clan he must stop the war which would destroy his homelands, yet his army is only a small force of weak emotions. The ensuing action is one of love and betrayal, of powerful magic and the unexpected, as the lives of a dozen characters merge in the fury of conquest, death and victory. Again, the Eternal Champion endures only to serve the Cosmic Balance.

Swords of Heaven is the most difficult job I've ever done. It's also brought me more joy than any other project I've undertaken. Hopefully, some of that emotion will be shared by those who read it.

Howard Chaykin



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CELTIA

AN EXQUISITE NEW PORTFOLIO BY JIM FITZPATRICK

Celtia, as the title implies, derives its subject matter from the Heroes and Heroines, God and Goddesses of Celtic Mythology, a source of inspiration for writers of heroic fantasy ever since Robert E. Howard blazed a spectacular path through the pages of imaginative literature. Now Jim Fitzpatrick, known in America for his previous portfolio & poster offering, The Book of Celtic Beasts, draws upon his Irish heritage to produce one of the highest quality art portfolios ever published for this market. Eight exquisite full color plates [illegible] in size, are housed within a rigid cardboard portfolio [illegible] Ireland in powerful dramatic compositions and meticulous detail. Drawing from the same source and style that influenced artists such as Barry Windsor Smith, Fitzpatrick has lavished an infinite amount of care in the creation of Celtia, especially in the staggering complex and beautiful decorative borders which surround the actual illustrations. The plates are presented on a separately printed sheet and all are enclosed in a white leatherette gold stamped folder which is signed and numbered as is the first plate. Limited [illegible] of 1,000 [illegible]

FABIAN FULL COLOR FOLIO

Steve Fabian has had the imaginations of science fiction and fantasy fans for the past decade. Now he's produced his most exciting and exhilarating portfolio that reveals the full range of his talents. Fabian's heroes and heroines emerge from the fabric of legend to challenge the shades of the past and future. Each of his stunning full-color, 8"x10" art cards are signed and issued in a limited edition. Each portfolio includes a booklet of artwork. Fabian's exclusive full version of each plate. This edition of 500 will be signed and numbered by the artist. $17.95.

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AMERICA'S TOP FANTASY ILLUSTRATOR
CREATES HIS FIRST PORTFOLIO

BORIS

With his extraordinary output over the past decade, Boris Vallejo has captured the imagination of the American public with his dynamic illustrations of CONAN, TARZAN, THE OOR SAGA and a host of other sword and sorcery epics. Now, he has produced *his first limited edition portfolio.*

Midnight Angels is a collection of six original pen and ink illustrations created especially for this portfolio. Here Boris explores the subjects he likes best: *barbaric warriors and fantastic creatures*— a signed and numbered edition of 200, in a folder and protective envelope. $25.

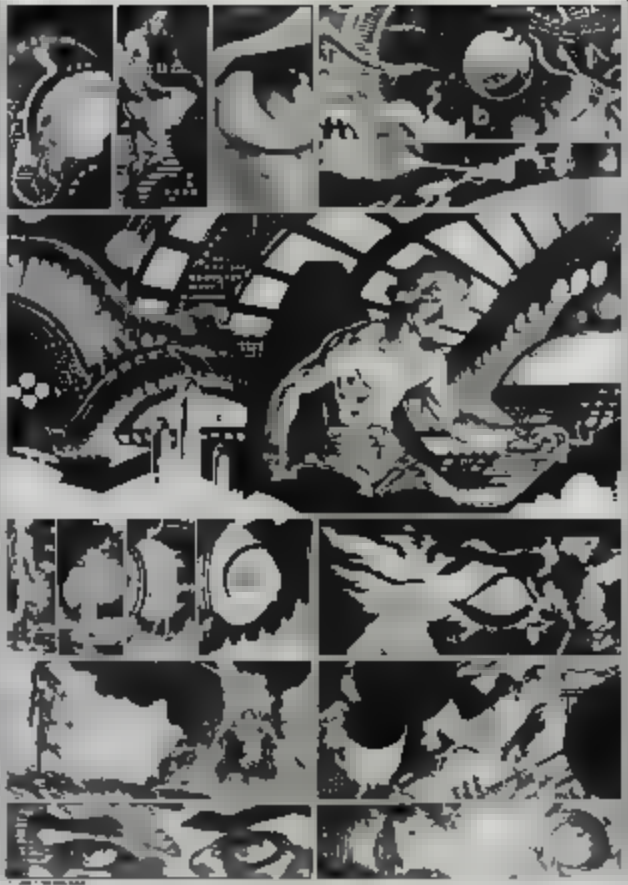
Midnight Angels

Craig Russell creates images like a composer orchestrates music. His table is one of human emotions; his instruments are love and hate, fear and passion, life and death. His baton is a pen dipped in the well of imagination, a source by which he has envisioned *La Sonnambula* and *the City of Sleep* and *Breakdown on the Starship Remembrance*—two completely different tales of graphic wonder that vibrantly lined his new book, Night Music. A high-quality production, 8½x11" on offset stock, bound beneath full-color covers, Night Music will delight the eye and enchant the heart. $4.95.

NIGHT MUSIC

A CONVERSATION WITH CRAIG

RUSSELL



MEDIASCENE

people whose philosophy is almost immediately apparent. Tell us about it.

CR: To put it into words, I definitely tend towards the heroic. I don't see the human figure expressed in the degenerate, pathetic role.

JS: Hogarth is another artist who considers the human figure in very heroic terms, but your work is far different from his. And that's expressed in many ways: the attitude of the figure, the weight distribution on the feet, the position of the hands (because the hand is a very dramatic element which can express many ideas), the tilting of the head. All of the subtle things that go into creating figures and making them expressive. You do it entirely in your own way, especially in your primary figures.

CR: Essentially, I'm responding to the concept of the story and using the figure in whatever way is necessary to dramatize that concept. Regardless of Kirby and Williamson, it seems to me that an artist should be able to draw a figure that is powerful when a character in the story is powerful, or lyrical when the character is lyrical.

JS: I didn't mean to imply that Kirby wasn't poetic with his figures. He is, or that Williamson isn't powerful. And certainly our work can project all of those things. But we have a predilection for certain ideas. Let me tell you one of mine, and maybe it'll make a little more sense. Take a panel as an example. Ten artists would each draw it differently. The differences might be very slight, but those differences will tell a great deal about the approach and style of an artist. Kirby would draw it at the moment of explosion. If a character is breaking down a door, the door would be in a thousand pieces at the peak of the action. I go for the moment before the explosion. My concept of storytelling and illustration expresses a kind of tension. I prefer to let the tension hold the reader's interest, to make him put himself in the scene to experience the explosion, to add what he has in his own imagination so that he becomes part of the action.

CR: You can do both. Leading the reader into it for certain reasons and then for other reasons using the explosive effect. It depends on what the story is.

JS: Of course, but I'm going much beyond that, to the most fundamental approach that is taken. There are some things that we would never do in a story, no matter what the story was. Our basic styles have their own rules. I haven't yet discovered why I do certain things, not all of them, although I do think about them. And I find that I deal with that moment of tension, just before the explosion, in most of my work. Even if I draw the explosion, there's something that still hangs back.

CR: I think the effect I'm trying to get to the viewer is emotional. I know that the drawing is right when I feel a certain way by looking at it. The one thing that keeps recurring in my drawings are these moments; this is why I work with sorcery and spells. It's not so much in explosive destruction, but the other kind of explosion, of inspiration, or birth or rebirth. Awareness is more of the kind of explosive response I've used more than anything else, more than when things are destroyed. Even my drawings of a city being blown up have been described as lyrical.

JS: Do you view that as a failure on your part? I once said to Alex Toth that all his work had glamour. He got very angry with me, but what I meant was that even when he draws a city dump it seems to have glamour in it.

CR: His response could depend on his definition of the word glamour. He may have felt that it means a cheap superficiality, which obviously no one could mean in referring to Alex Toth's work.

JS: Certainly not. But even his ugly characters seem to have glamour.

CR: But how do you define the word glamour?

JS: Well, I may have been too cavalier in my use of the word, but they all seem, let's say, Hollywoodized, all cast perfectly for the part—like any MGM movie made from 1932 to 1958. It was difficult to find a really ugly person in those films. Even the villains, who should be typecast ugly, were not. They were glamorous. Take a western for example, a movie like **Shane**. The personification of evil was Jack Palance, who was very attractive. The opposite would be the Sergio Leone westerns. There are characters in those movies that no decent Hollywood studio during the period I named would have on the lot.

CR: I've seen enough films in the last 15 years to know what you mean.

JS: OK. That's what I meant by glamorous. Your work seems to lack ugliness, too.

CR: My style and Toth's are very different, but we're both romantic-type artists. Romanticism may have malevolent characters, but its view of humanity doesn't find it necessary to concentrate on small, mean characters, as an end in itself. I think too many underground artists and filmmakers in the last couple of decades are really obsessed with degradation and low characters. It's a loss of grandeur.

JS: Let's say for example that you really wanted to draw something ugly and evil. Would that be possible? I'm looking at a page from **Night Music**. It's a nightmare. It comes out of the sea, where the girl's floating above the water. It's a very beautiful nightmare.

CR: Exactly.

JS: Now, really, Craig—give it to us straight now. Which is it that you want us to be, repelled or attracted?

CR: I don't want you to be repelled by the drawing, but at the same time I don't want you to be attracted to the subject matter for its own sake. It's there within the larger context of the story; you can't pick the picture out by itself and expect it to make any sense.

JS: Do you analyze your own work? I'm referring to the meaning behind the work, what it means to you and the people who see it. Why it works or why it's failed, for that matter.

CR: I think, especially in the stories that I write, one theme that comes through is dissolution or transformation of one kind of being to another. That's why I use sorcerers and magic, because it gives me an opportunity to show the ecstatic conflagration. It's pure emotional impact that I'm trying for, which is why I can never be satisfied with panels that are all the same size except for an intellectual exercise.

Remember your story, **Frogs**; it was the most amazing thing you ever did, or that I ever saw—48 panels that were all the same size but with extraordinary impact. For you to do that, after such manipulation of the forms in **Captain America**, was simply amazing.

…tion.

JS: Frogs was an exercise in storytelling. If you remember at the time, both DC and Marvel comics were riddled with outrageous panel breakdowns. If you had a rectangular mirror and you threw a baseball at it, and the mirror would shatter into six or eight pieces, their panels would have those kinds of shapes, completely fragmented to confuse and confound the reader.

CR: They were the opposite of expressive. I found it very confusing.

JS: Exactly. If an artist has to fragment a page like a broken mirror to be interesting, he shouldn't be working in the business.

CR: I wouldn't be quite that extreme, but I would say that it's a mannerism.

JS: Are you suggesting that I overreacted, Craig?

CR: No. Not you, never you.

JS: Can I clarify my overreaction? I think I was partially responsible for some of the unusual techniques being abused in the comic format today.

CR: You spawned a whole legion of non-storytellers with your advanced work and special effects.

JS: I think that in creating **Frogs** and **Chandler** I was trying, right… …responsible for. It's not that I did the wrong, but I led people who weren't ready to handle those devices down the wrong path by showing them the light. So I thought I'd show them another light.

CR: It's the same thing with people learning how to draw like Kirby or Buscema because it's the house style. They haven't arrived at that style's true meaning, so it's like a [illegible]

JS: I think the Adams imitators are the most blatant at this point. Adams is so seductive with his work, but only he really understands it. It's the same with Kirby; he knows what all those squiggles mean, but few other people can pick it up beyond its most external forms.

CR: About the style of anatomy and what lines mean, I'm just discovering that myself. When I began in comics, I knew almost nothing about drawing. I studied John Buscema because he was the house artist at the time. It's only been in the last few years when I haven't had editorial control that I started learning how to draw. Now my characters are becoming taller and slimmer, a little more elegant than the more brutish superhero. Although I like powerful, heroic figures, my most recent characters are more graceful than the ones I've seen in comics.

JS: When we draw, we put a lot of ourselves into the art. It's like acting out fantasies like a movie actor would play a gunfighter in a western. I know that when I was drawing Nick Fury, he became me and I became him in a subtle way. With Captain America, or the villains that I created, I felt just like I would if I were an actor. I was portraying them. I was bringing them to life with my imagination, my experience, my values. The archetypal figure that finally evolved, let's call it the Steranko figure, is a summation of everything that I am, that I stand for philosophically, politically, emotionally, artistically, spiritually. Is your approach to the figure, your taller, grander, more heroic figure, the ultimate Craig Russell?

CR: I don't look like that, if that's what you mean.

JS: Let me put it another way. Just because Craig Russell only happens to be five foot nine and weighs a hundred fifty pounds doesn't mean that Craig Russell isn't the reincarnation of Siegfried or Joe Bonomo or Bronco Nagurski. Just by sheer accident you happen to be that size and weight. What I'm saying is, the heart and mind and spirit of Craig Russell may not match the physical Craig Russell. Maybe what you're doing is showing us what the ideal world of Craig Russell really looks like.

CR: That's it.

JS: Could you put that in your own words.

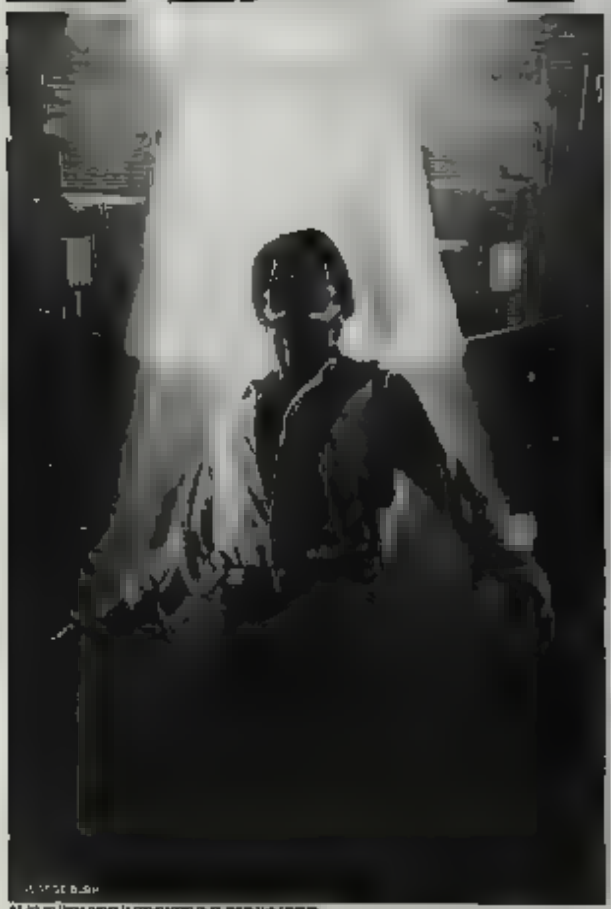
CR: It was what I was trying to explain earlier about romantic art. Although you may have a whole range of characters and ideas in making a story, the one that you focus on, the one that your sympathies obviously lie with, is the one which embodies that which you see as ideal for man to be. It isn't that by drawing a heroic figure you're saying that people should look heroic, obviously that would be biologically impossible. What you're saying is that this is what you choose to contemplate, what is worthy of contemplation. We aspire to that not in the physical realm, but in the metaphysical.

JS: So Parsifal and Avatar are really the metaphysical manifestation of Craig Russell.

CR: Especially Avatar—not only an extension of myself, but my view of humanity, which is opposed to those views of mankind being worthless, corrupt and violent. And it's part of that belief that justifies drawing characters that are not nihilistic, that have a benevolent view of the universe.

It's there not only in what I draw, but in the way that I draw. From **Dr. Strange** right up to **Night Music**, my work has constantly reaffirmed that statement—and I think there's an audience out there that will agree with me. ■

Mediascene



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After a series of little changes, a switch of editors and a host of minor problems, Marvel's new fantasy magazine, **Epic Illustrated**, has finally been scheduled for release in February 1980. It has been designed to capitalize on the current 'adult' market for science fiction, adventure fantasy inscrutable plot concepts and super-rendered art.

Archie Goodwin, the book's editor outlines his approach for this highly-promo'd package. "Perhaps I can explain Epic best by comparing it with **Heavy Metal**. Though we intend to have the same high-level art and production, I plan to put an emphasis on the story content. My impression of **Heavy Metal** is that they take the work as it is presented to them, building issues around certain themes.

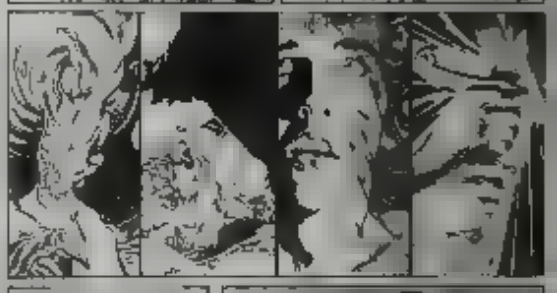
"I intend to develop material editorially, team writers and artists that are exciting and compatible, and structure the work specifically for the magazine. **Heavy Metal** often takes a tongue-in-cheek approach. I'd like to see some of that here, but most people that like science fiction tend to take it seriously, so I'm going for a straightforward treatment with solid dramatic and emotional love. I want these stories to move people, to make them cry or feel uplifted from having read them."

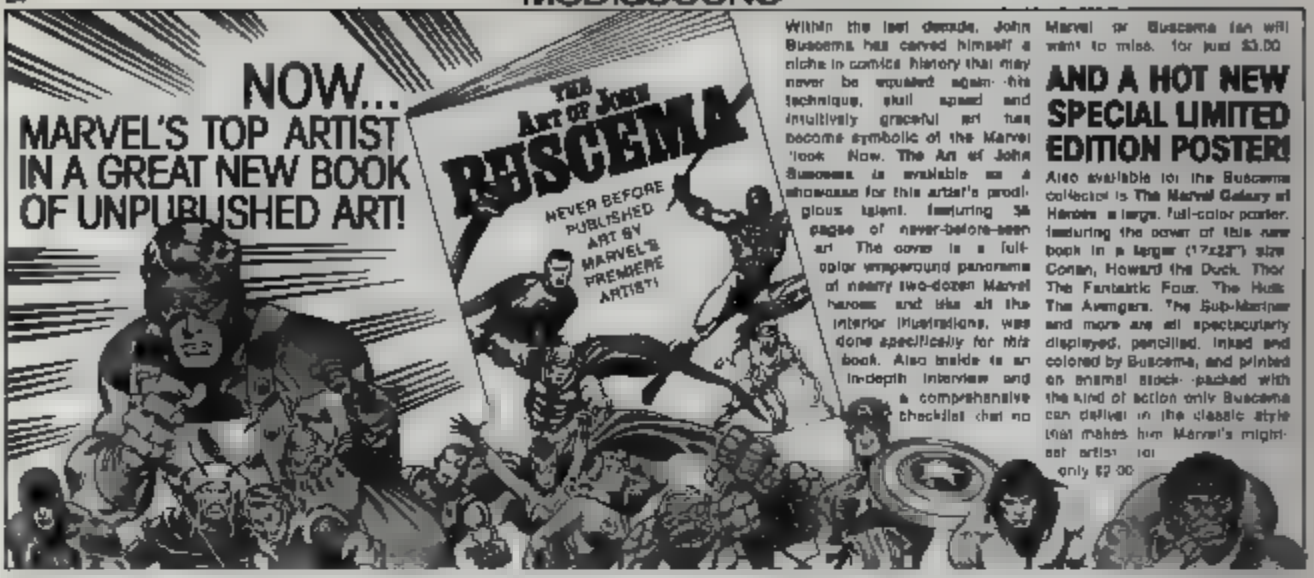
"Epic will feature about 80% straight dramatic material and 20% humorous or satirical matter. 96 pages, two-thirds in full color. There will be adaptations in coming issues such as a Samuel Delany and Howie Chaykin team-up and, of course, Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad are collaborating on Robert E. Howard's **Almuric**. We have the vaguest of feelers out for Harlan Ellison, but it's too early yet for any firm commitments.

"As you know, I took over when Dick Marschall was fired, and although the material he left is not the kind I would have bought, he did manage to collect some interesting things like the George Pratt illustration and the story he later wrote to go with it. The Lee Buscema Surfer story stands on its own as a nice cosmic fantasy. Stan gave it a more sophisticated approach.

"We're going with the Frazetta cover for the first issue, seven Roman centurions standing on a mountaintop. Two or three chapters of Starlin's **Metamorphosis Odyssey** will be the longest feature, and a one-pager with a political punchline by a very graphic, opinionated artist will be the format. Bob Larkin contributed a three-page holocaust humor piece, and there's a new fairy/fantasy tale by Wendy Pini. We're using Ray Puns's eerie supernatural story, **Lullaby of Samsam**, and an adventure fantasy by Arthur Suydam. In addition to several other articles.

"It's shaping up very well. There's not a fight scene in every issue, but there's something equally spectacular in almost all of them. Stan has called it a daring dream and he'd be satisfied if it were merely a pull-out." ●




NOW...
MARVEL'S TOP ARTIST
IN A GREAT NEW BOOK
OF UNPUBLISHED ART!
THE ART OF JOHN BUSCEMA
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED ART BY MARVEL'S PREMIERE ARTIST!

Within the last decade, John Buscema has carved himself a niche in comics history that may never be equaled again. His technique, skill speed and intuitively graceful art has become symbolic of the Marvel 'look'. Now, The Art of John Buscema is available as a showcase for this artist's prodigious talent. Featuring 96 pages of never-before-seen art. The cover is a full-color wraparound panorama of nearly two-dozen Marvel heroes and like all the interior illustrations, was done specifically for this book. Also inside is an in-depth interview and a comprehensive checklist that no Marvel or Buscema fan will want to miss. for just $3.00

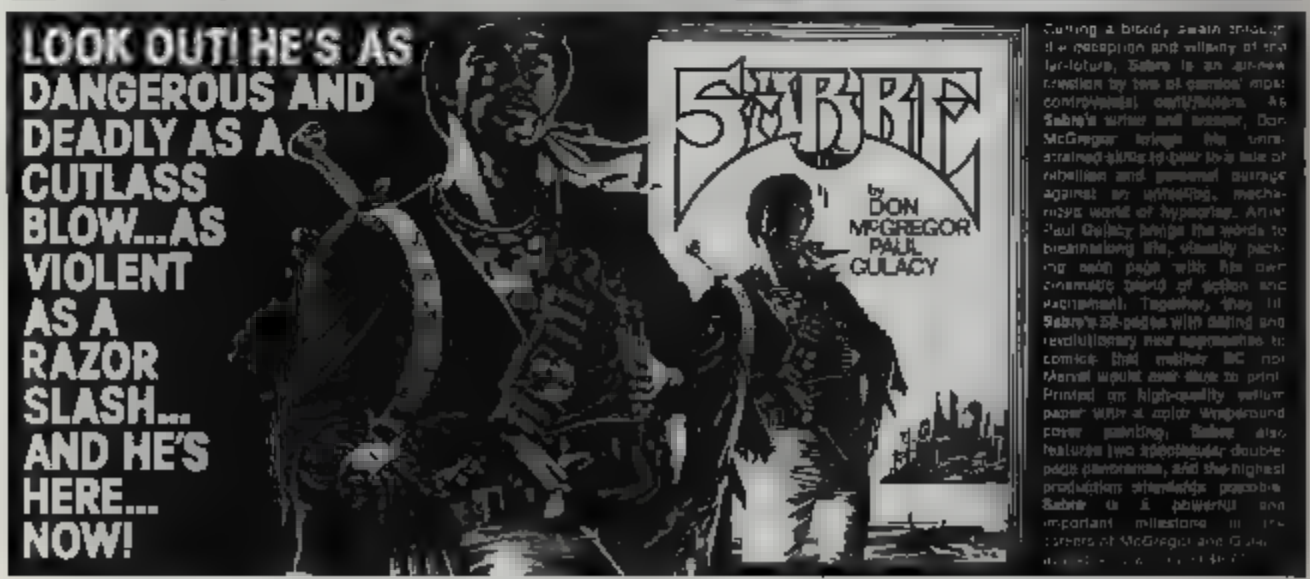
AND A HOT NEW SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION POSTER!

Also available for the Buscema collector is **The Marvel Galaxy of Heroes** a large, full-color poster, featuring the cover of this new book in a larger (17x22") size Conan, Howard the Duck, Thor The Fantastic Four, The Hulk The Avengers, The Sub-Mariner and more are all spectacularly displayed, penciled, inked and colored by Buscema, and printed on enamel stock packed with the kind of action only Buscema can deliver in the classic style that makes him Marvel's mightiest artist for only $2.00

Frazetta is renowned for his visions of barbarians and women. Women of the Ages combines them both in seven spectacular creations printed on heavy linen stock 11x15" in a limited edition of 500 copies, each signed and numbered by Frazetta in a heavy protective envelope $60

AND A VERY SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION PRINT AVAILABLE NOW!

Nightwinds is for the most discriminating collectors of Frazetta art, and those who speculate in rare limited edition graphics. Produced in the small quantity of 100 Nightwinds is a high-quality photo-print reproduced in large size and in such perfect detail that even the subtlest of brushstrokes are clearly and brilliantly discernable. The subject is top Frazetta, an armored barbarian, naked slave girl, rugged rocks and foliage and a fully painted background. A beautiful print for matting and framing. The artist's signature is painted on in the same fashion he signs his work $120


LOOK OUT! HE'S AS DANGEROUS AND DEADLY AS A CUTLASS BLOW...AS VIOLENT AS A RAZOR SLASH... AND HE'S HERE... NOW!
SABRE
by
DON McGREGOR
PAUL GULACY

Cutting a bloody swath through the deception and villainy of the far-future, Sabre is an all-new creation by two of comics' most controversial contributors. As Sabre's writer and creator, Don McGregor brings his unrestrained, gung-ho pen to his tale of rebellion and personal courage against an unfeeling, mechanized world of hypocrisy. Artist Paul Gulacy brings the words to breathtaking life, visually packing each page with his own cinematic blend of action and excitement. Together, they fill Sabre's 32 pages with daring and revolutionary new approaches to comics that neither DC nor Marvel would ever dare to print. Printed on high-quality vellum paper with a color wraparound cover painting, Sabre also features two spectacular double-page panoramas, and the highest production standards possible. Sabre is a powerful and important milestone in the careers of McGregor and Gulacy

COMIXSCENE

Up in the sky! Is it a bird? A plane?

Guess again. It's the Silver Surfer streaking towards Hollywood for his film debut which will co-star him with Cheese-queen Olivia Newton-John. The shimmering sky-rider of the spaceways and the golden girl of song in flashy trashy threat lover? Sherbet

And it's all true maybe according to Stan Lee.

The project is firmly underway with Miss Newton-John's manager Lee Kramer and various moneybags to explore the feasibility of bringing the Surfer to the screen on a budget of $20 to $30 million with half the money promised from various sources already

for live-action Spidey-flick films and the unthinkable Captain Scheneggia which Marvel hopes to have a hand in adapting.

Speaking of adaptations Marvel will be producing **The Empire Strikes Back** next May in a variety of formats all connection with the release of the film **Empire** will be issues of **Super Special** an oblique yet regular sized comic and a paperback (yes! the original **Star Wars** did. And in a real artistic coup a Williamson has been assigned to do all 96 pages with a script by Archie Goodwin.

Comic fans probably remember Williamson best from his EC days and the handful of Flash

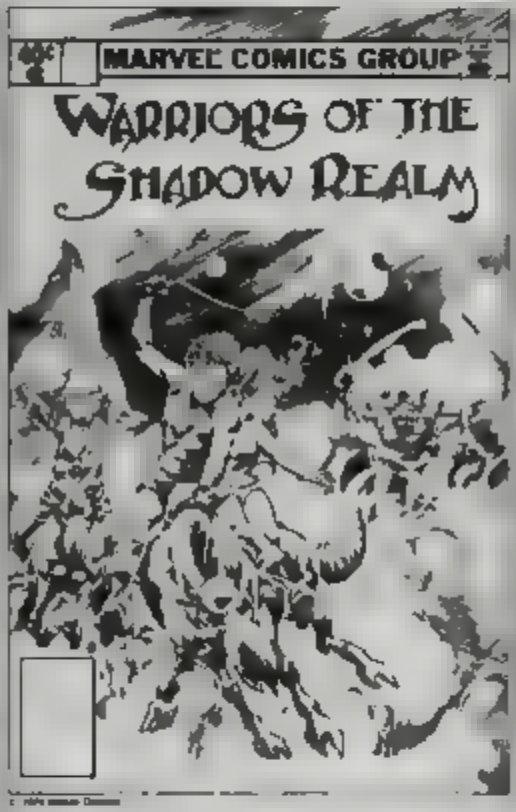
Gordon books in the early 60s. Now Archie will be returning to the comics field after being the Secret Agent Corrigan newspaper strip which he has laboured for twelve years.

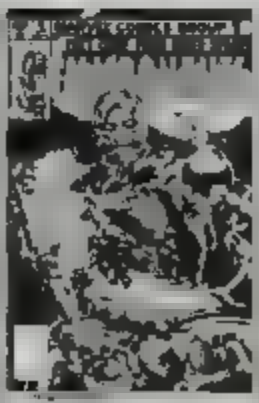
"I'm looking forward to this project. A comment I really liked the first film and was sorry couldn't do the newspaper strip when it started up last year. Such a fantasy has always been a favourite subject matter and I feel that if a low budget can really do well, so plan to give his job everything I can."

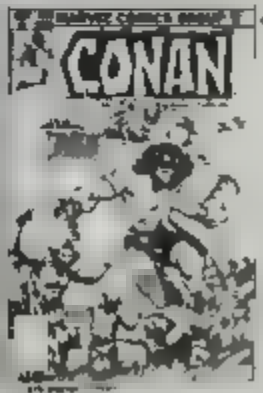
The Star Wars Corporation was the first to propose Williamson for the Empire adaptation. Lucas has long been an admirer of Archie's work and Jim Shooter was quite agreeable to the

Flash Gordon's sensitivity when the time comes a particularly prized gem for Williamson's crown because Flash was the inspiration for his style and technique of drawing the reason he became a comic artist in the first place. It's the character he was born to do and fans everywhere know it. But first the Empire must strike back in the spring.

Future issues of **Super Special** will showcase the Dazzler a character created by Marvel, which Casablanca Record and Filmworks has licensed so that they can hire a performer to cut records tying into the Dazzler hint while the deal between Marvel and Parker Brothers for Rom the Space Knight Dazzler







Despite a Variety report that a screenplay by Stan is being heavily rewritten the truth of the matter is that the project is nowhere near that stage. "There is no screenplay yet," Stan informed **MEDIASCENE**. All we've written is a general outline treatment of the action. We're still deciding on which characters and elements will play best.

"I don't begin to do a final draft screenplay until a budget is set and we know how much can be spent on sets and special effects."

Olivia Newton-John enters the picture through her manager Lee Kramer the Surfer film's executive producer the same job he is currently filling for Olivia's current musical fantasy film Xanadu. Anything is possible at this point. Stan admits and there may well be a strong part in the film for Jinkie why not?

While the project progresses so too are explorations for the special effects like those needed to make the Surfer glide gracefully on his board. One European inventor may be involved due to his breakthroughs in the manipulation of magnetic fields. He claims to be able to levitate objects several feet in the air. How to paint someone silver from head to toe and not have him chip or peel is quite another matter. Stan has promised **MEDIASCENE** the answer to these and many more questions as they develop.

Also in discussion stages, are at least two different proposals

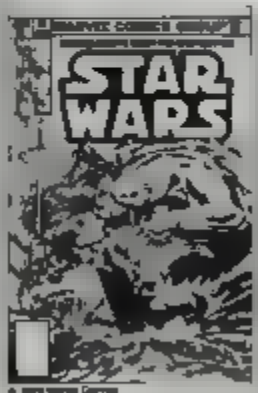
suggestion. Goodwin is still breaking the film script down into comics form and a deadline has been set in February for the completion of all 96 pages. Fortunately Al and Archie have long been collaborators on Corrigan and Carlos Garzon will pitch in to help meet the deadline.

Fans everywhere will be pleased to see Williamson return to the comics fold since nobody draws unearthly women, weird creatures and graceful human figures quite the way Al does. Perhaps he can resume his career as one of the comic book medium's top artists with this one assignment. And to top it all off he has also been offered the chance to adapt the

all (not be promoted into her own monthly title and packed off to disco heaven written by Tom Orzechowski and illustrated by John Buscema Jr.

Other new projects and titles in the Marvel horizon include the announced Sub-Mariner revival **Moonknight** and **Warriors of the Shadow Realm**. Stan is even looking for someone to draw a restricted **Steve Sunter** comic on a regular basis offering the assignment personally to Brunner and Gil Kane. There is also a strong possibility that a western series will be created simply because everybody wants to do one, explains Jim Shooter. It will probably be a spin-off from the Conan Hammer one-shot scheduled for **Marvel Premiere**, and a shoot out will be held amongst competing artists and writers for the assignment.

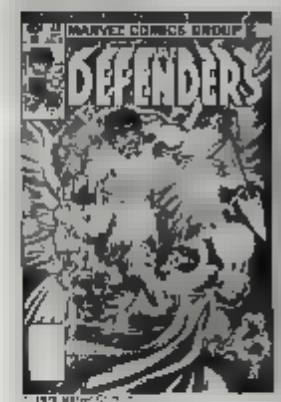
There is even a book being created specifically to meet the desires of Marvel's top artist Barry Windsor-Smith at this stage as John Buscema's dream book. It is simply a series compiled by Buscema to cater to his particular fantasies providing him with the ideal outlet for his artistic talents. John just came in one day and we got to talking," Shooter explains. "There were things John wanted to do that were not within the scope of Conan and felt was a framework of a particular version of Savage Land. We discussed various approaches to the concept. I took it up to Stan, and he said, go ahead and



COMIXSCENE

ley if John and Roy are currently polishing the idea and expect him to spring it on me any day now In a way it will probably improve all of John's work because he will now have an assignment he is really enthusiastic about and the energy will spill over into Conan John always does the work but this could make it even better In the same way this work was enlivened on Warriors of the Shadow Realm Only the footnote that Buscema was considering an offer from DC at the time was forgotten when Shooter explained the matter to MEDIASCENE

The last new title being considered is an American printing of the English produced



Dr Who comic The series has been running on a weekly basis in Great Britain for some time so a backlog of material exists In addition the Doctor is enjoying a modest underground success in the thanks to Time-Life's sponsorship on PBS and fans are hoping for more Who in the future

A few of the cracks in Marvel's pot of gold were brought into the spotlight by the New York Times on October 3 by N R Kleinfield on the first page of the business section It cited the internal upheavals and personnel changes occurring under Shooter's tenure in the last year or so Specifically it raised several questions about the advisability of tampering with the creative structure in such a way as to drive top writers like Len Wein Thor Fantastic Four, The Hulk and Marv Wolfman Dracula, Spider-Man, Fantastic Four into the open arms of the competition DC Comics

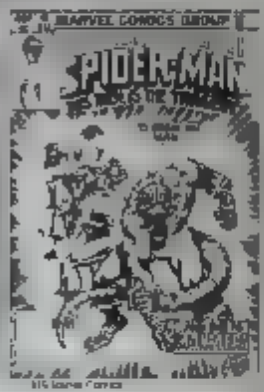
Shooter discounted the Times piece by saying and everyone else I have talked to, feel that the entire article was written before anyone was talked and the only reason Stan Roy and myself were asked to was to add some legitimate names to give the piece credibility The questions asked were more like accusations and from the how-and-a half conversation had with the writer only a few phrases were utilized jigged out of context so as to create completely different meanings to what

Denny O'Neil who is replacing Marv on several titles disputes claims of bruised egos and has been quoted as saying that he morale looks fine to the Nevertheless at least three of Marvel's top remaining writers are studying stacks of DC comics and looking behind the scenes for a crack at the Justice League—just in case

Wolfman will be leaving Marvel in mid-November rather than December in a move that came as a surprise to him By compressing a week's vacation and sick leave allocation along with his overtime Marv was to have received for working on a merchandising project Marvel has managed to fulfill nearly all its financial commitments to

Wolfman's contract He has only to write one FF tale a Star Trek a Machine Man and two Spider-Mans and submit three plots before he goes—all of which will be completed in a few weeks

Marv was given no opportunity to work out his contract or even have a say in the settlement and consequently resents the idea of having the rug pulled out from under him One way or another through work lost and time expended in working up plots I lost money and a certain amount of respect for the company I never thought I'd say it but I'm glad to get away from Marvel as fast as can now Shooter's attitude has killed most of my desire to finish what am



committed to complete As a matter of fact have been thinking more about Green Lantern these days than Marvel—and I'm looking towards the future

It's too bad things happened this way really liked doing Marvel's books and had just plotted a Spider-Man tale with the Vulture which could have been the best story I've ever done, but won't sell them the plot to it It's worth more than the aggravation they've given me lately It is very clear that they don't want me around they even called DC to see if I would be available for me in November so that wouldn't have a financial reason to take my contract to arbitration I'm ready to go "

said must say that the whole incident was totally out of character for the Times it was somewhat of a cheap shot

The following Monday Marvel President James Galton called an office meeting to rebut the Times article and wound up giving a pep-talk on the future of comics According to several sources he was about to make a statement on the impracticality of the editor/editor system using Wolfman as an example of deadline problems until he spotted Marv in the audience According to Wolfman "He started to say something then just went silent Maybe he just didn't know that I was nearly always ahead on my deadlines he, like Stan gets his information from Shooter

news/views/reviews from the world of comics

To put the entire situation into perspective, however, one must confront the undeniable fact that Marvel Comics' sales are up, not a lot, but much higher than DC's—deadlines are less of a problem, and the new bonus incentive system is putting hard cash into creators' pockets. These are goals that no other editor-in-chief of Marvel has ever attained, internal discord not withstanding.

Shooter is also trying to push comics into previously uncharted realms. One such experiment was the production of a 16-page **Spider-Man vs. The Hulk** comic, with a slick cover and stapled spine, stuffed free into newspapers such as the **Gotham-less Dispatch**. Written by Wolfman and Shooter, and drawn by Sal Buscema, the give-away Sunday comic is an ingenious merchandising plan, allowing Marvel to guarantee its advertisers that they are reaching literally *millions* of people. Then, ad rates in these books could be fixed at a sufficiently high price to underwrite production costs, turn a profit, and help publicize the rest of the Marvel Comics Group in the major cities where comics distribution is a novelty.

Another gambit in the comics distribution game is being played by Marvel, independent of Curtis, their newsstand sales agents. Marvel has hired its own people to contact dealers across the country for the purpose of direct sales—and the reported results have been surprisingly positive.

With the shuffling of so many books recently, Denny O'Neil is being groomed to take over as the writer of the Spider-Man titles in five or six months, and Doug Moench is finally getting a crack at some of Marvel's bigger superheroes by way of two-issue fill-ins for **Marvel Team-Up** and **The Fantastic Four**. "I'm really glad to get an opportunity to show I can handle these major characters," Doug responded. "I've been trying to get a couple of these assignments for years."

And finally, Marvel is entering the fan marketplace sometime in the near future, producing specialized books for the fan audience, written and drawn by the people fans want to see, without restraint of the Comics Code or mass-market considerations. Jim Shooter explains:

"The success of the *Weird-world* project has pretty much opened the door for experimentation. One idea is the collectors' exclusives, produced on quality paper, tailored specifically for fans—perhaps in the format of the European full-color comic albums, or Will Simonson's Alien adaptation.

"This is a marketplace that exists, and is more tolerant of higher prices in the pursuit of quality material. It will give us a chance to develop different projects because fans tend to be a little more sophisticated than the general buying public. Both groups like the same material, but the fans are passionate enough about some artists and writers to appreciate them even though they may be essentially non-commercial on the newsstand.

"Such a project is financially feasible because fans usually buy out the first issue of anything, and **Epic** has already been prepaid for twice its costs, and it won't see print until spring. If the fans support this, it could lead to a line of books produced with limited runs at higher cost and *no limit* to the quality.

"I understand that DC is doing something similar by negotiating with Mike Friedrich for the use of Batman in one of his **Star Reach** packages. The idea is viable, obviously, but I think that there is no reason why we, who create and publish comics all the time, should license away the right to make comics to someone else. That's our business."

So far, no definite plans have been set for this fan-oriented project, but Shooter has talked with Frank Miller about working on a Daredevil and Spider-Man book sometime in the future.

From the west coast, Roy Thomas gave **MEDIASCENE** a run-down of his latest endeavors. "I'm currently adapting the two Andrew Offutt Conan novels into six issues of **Savage Sword**, to follow the four-part **Conan the Liberator** stint in which he becomes a king. I understand Andy's already written another novel which comes in between them. I've also read the manuscript of Poul Anderson's first Conan novel, **Conan the Rebel**, which I'll probably find a way to adapt. Meanwhile, Karl Edward Wagner's **The Road of Kings**, will become several issues of the color **Conan** right after a four-part adaptation of Marvel Page's **Sons of the Bear God**, the second Prester John novel he wrote in the 30s. As you may recall, his first Prester John novel became the basis of three best-selling **Conan** issues several years back, and I've intended ever since to do the follow-up, which will appear in issues 109-112.

"Meanwhile, the four deCamp/Carter **Conan of Aquilonia** segments will become **King Conan** 1-4, a quarterly comic

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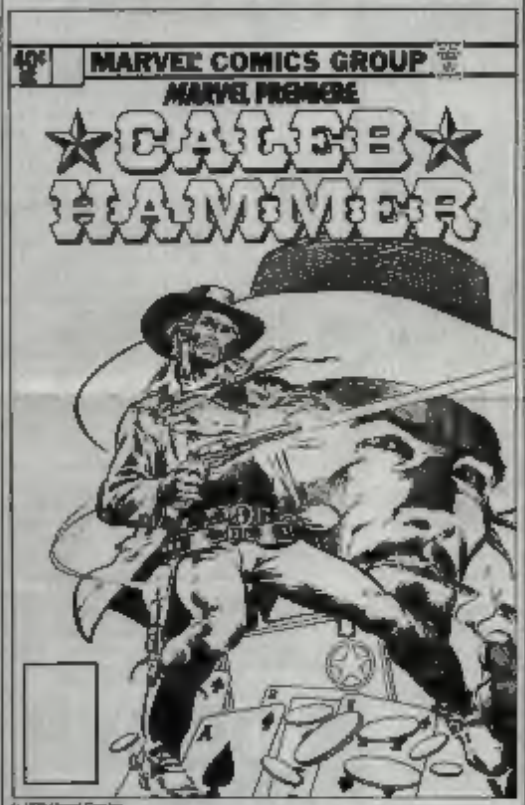

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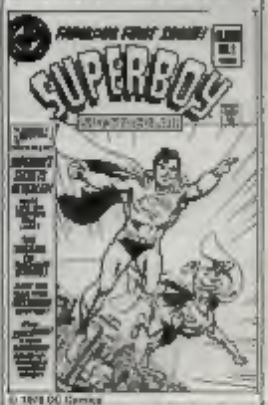

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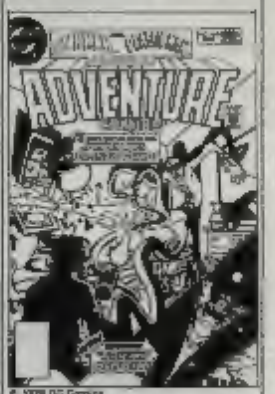

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COMIXSCENE

starting in December, with **Conan the Avenger** (by deCamp and Nyberg) done as a flashback for 5-8. **Conan of the Isles** will constitute the next couple of **Conan Annuals**.

"The only other Conan story not yet adapted is deCamp and Carter's sequel to the *Jewels of Gwahlur*, which being done by Nestor Redondo. And their own sequel to *Black Colossus*, which I pre-empted with my own years ago, has been altered into several weeks of the Conan newspaper strip. Mike Vosburg and Alfredo Alcala are doing *City of Skulls*, which will almost have to be a What If? issue of **Savage Sword**, since it conflicts totally with what Neal Adams pencilled for the color Conan years ago. In between all these goings on are a few original tales, like this year's **Annual** and **Conan 108**.

"Approval has just been given for another **Conan Super Special**, and I'm just waiting for John to have time to draw it. I have in mind a weird story, a sort of combination Conan and Agatha Christie. Meanwhile, Alcala is pencilling and inking his first full Conan story, an adaptation of REH's non-Conan *Hawks of Outremer*. He's also doing an REH/Carter tale, starring Kull, *Wizards and Warriors*, as a back-up for **Savage Sword**. Tony DeZuniga is pencilling the **Red Sonja Super Special** from a plot by Christy Marx, vaguely outlined by myself. Dick Giordano is redrawing the artwork for Sonja's origin, since Chaykin's original version that appeared in **Kull and the Barbarians** is nearly unintelligible. Giordano is following Howie's layout's however, so we'll try to get him a credit and reprint payments—the same goes for Doug Moench's script.

"In **Thor**, I'm still working on my multi-part epic, which now drifts into high gear with material based upon the Wagnerian *Ring* tetralogy. Buscema and I had discussed this as material for a graphic novel, but since Craig Russell (with whom I'm working on Elric for Mike Friedrich) was working along similar lines, I just tossed it into **Thor** instead.

"Archie Goodwin tells me that **Almuric**, by Conrad and myself should definitely appear (all 18 pages of it) in **Epic 1**. I've written half of it, and Tim is coloring. And that ought to keep me out of the pool halls."

Over at DC things are not nearly as hectic, but there are changes in the wind for several books.

The new, revitalized, old-but-modern **Wonder Woman** will be inked by Wally Wood, who is returning to comics, working over Jose Delbo pencils. Another expatriate coms home is Tony DeZuniga, who is drawing at least one issue of **Jonah Hex**, the western series he helped launch several years ago and which showcased some of his best comics work ever.

Len Wein and Jim Starlin are teaming to produce a two-part tale for **DC Presents**, which will co-star Superman and Supergirl, followed by an appearance of the Martian Manhunter. Starlin is also penciling a number of covers for various mystery and war books, as well as the usual **JLA** and **Adventure** assignments.

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Batman back to big screen

Not on the heels of **Superman The Movie** is a new film production being formed to create the ultimate Batman movie under the corporate auspices of Batfilm Productions Inc. A first draft screenplay is currently under revision, and the time is coming when a director will be chosen. Ex-MGM vice-president Benjamin Melniker is **Batman**'s executive producer, and comic writer/historian Michael Uslan is the producer.

According to Uslan "This film will be done straight. We are going to try to get as far away from the television version as possible." Christmas 1981 is the targeted release date for **Batman**, following the scheduled unveiling of the much-delayed **Superman II**.

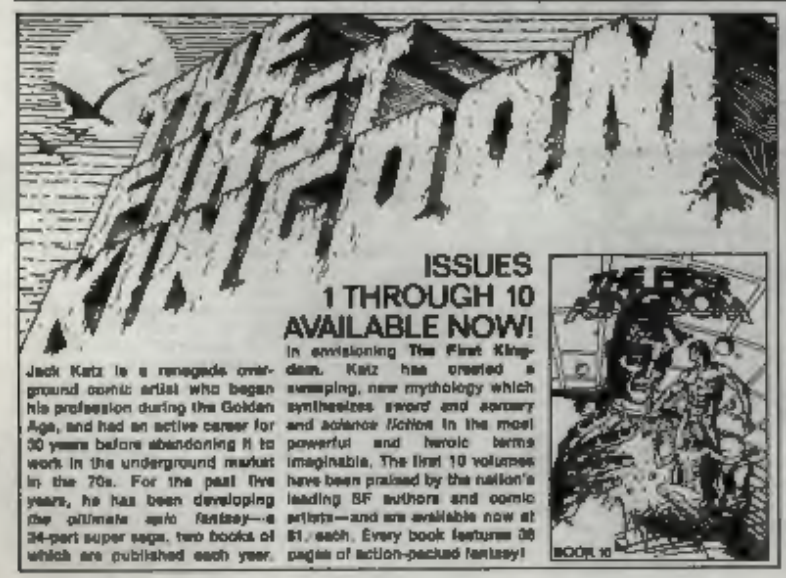
Except for a handful of covers every month, Ross Andru has virtually disappeared from the public's eye, but that does not mean he isn't working. Ross has been producing work for items like **The Superman Mix and Match Book**, the **Superman Pop-Up Book** and the **Wonder Woman Pop-Up Book**, all of which are among the most impressively creative uses of the formats seen in years. Between these jobs, Andru is slowly but surely, one page at a time, drawing an issue of **Jonah Hex** as well—it seems that everybody wants to do at least one western story these days.

Joe Kubert is also expanding his repertoire of covers to include an occasional **Batman, Ghosts**, and an **Unknown Soldier** inked by Dan Heck. Len Wein has asked Joe to produce several **Batman** concept covers so that stories can be based upon them, and Joe is reportedly pleased to comply when time permits.

Kubert has been keeping a low profile in comics for the last several years, and soon fans will begin to understand why. At first, this was because he was busy organizing the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc., but more recently, he has been absent due to a special, outside project which has been kept under wraps for nearly a year.

Stated simply, Joe has been working on creating electronic animated cartoons. Working with a staff of 30 computer scientists, artists and animators, Joe has been traveling regularly to the New York Institute of Technology on Long Island, where he has helped to solve the problem of getting a computer to automatically fill in between an experienced animator's primary drawings, so that thousands of hours of tedious labor can be avoided, yet the same pleasing, flowing continuity of art can be maintained.

Their first successful presentation was used during the opening and closing segments of **The CBS Library**—one minute of film created by a computer. An entire series is currently being produced, based upon an idea of Kubert's. Its title is **Karmak**, a science-fiction oriented character, which **MEDIASCENE** will preview before its release, along with a more detailed explanation of the latest breakthrough in art and [illegible] to come [illegible] TV.●



Jack Katz is a renegade underground comic artist who began his profession during the Golden Age, and had an active career for 30 years before abandoning it to work in the underground market in the 70s. For the past five years, he has been developing the ultimate epic fantasy—a 24-part super saga, two books of which are published each year. In envisioning **The First Kingdom**, Katz has created a sweeping, new mythology which synthesizes *sword and sorcery* and *science fiction* in the most powerful and heroic terms imaginable. The first 10 volumes have been praised by the nation's leading SF authors and comic artists—and are available now at $1.00 each. Every book features 36 pages of action-packed fantasy!

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